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INSTAGRAM AS A MARKETING TOOL:

Case Study: Musti & Mirri Kaarina



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Case study: Musti&Mirri Kaarina

As social media and different channels have reached a vital role in business marketing it is crucial to know how to utilize these channels correctly and in an efficient way. Instagram is among the leading channels in social media, and the focus in this Thesis. The study presents a co-operation with the company Musti & Mirri Kaarina's Instagram account managed by the author. The primary objective for this research was to gain deeper understanding of Instagram marketing and learn how to utilize it best as a marketing tool. The secondary objective was to create a successful Instagram marketing plan for the case company and perceive Instagram's efficiency by testing the suggested marketing tool for a time-period of one month. The research also implements interviews from Instagram influencers.

The information about Instagram marketing and the primary data were gathered from literature, Instagram Insights, the Internet, articles and relevant books. The information familiarizes the reader with the details of Instagram marketing. The theory also explains basic marketing plans which are implemented into the case company's Instagram account. The secondary data was collected via interviews conducted with two Finnish Instagram influencers, selected for the interview based on their account theme and follower amount.

The research was completed by mixed and qualitative methods. The marketing strategy for the case company's account was completed successfully with the assistance of the primary literature sources. The main findings discovered when the marketing strategy was created were insights on how to create a professional business profile, how to conduct a content calendar and how to manage every aspect of it. The results of the marketing strategy testing period indicate that an Instagram marketing strategy is beneficial for the company account and easier to manage with the help of a content calendar. Interview responses from Instagram influencers validated the usefulness of sources utilized in the making of the marketing plan. Despite neither of the interviewees had previously had a marketing strategy on their account, they would classify it as beneficial for managing the account. Recommendations for future research are suggested since Instagram evolves continually, and new features could arise. Based on the efficient results of the Instagram marketing strategy created for Kaarina's account, it would be recommended for other Turku region Musti & Mirri stores to adapt the marketing strategy into their Instagram accounts.

KEYWORDS:

Marketing, Digital Marketing, Social Media, Instagram, Musti & Mirri

Sofia Larte

INSTAGRAM MARKKINOINTIVÄLINEENÄ

Tapaustudkimus: Musti & Mirri Kaarina

Sosiaalinen media ja sen eri kanavat ovat saavuttaneet merkittävän roolin yritysmarkkinoinnissa, ja siksi on erittäin tärkeää osata hyödyntää näitä kanavia oikealla ja tehokkaalla tavalla. Sosiaalisen median yksi suurimmista kanavista on Instagram, johon tämä opinnäytetyö keskittyy. Tutkimus esittelee yhteistyötä Musti ja Mirri Kaarinan toimipisteen Instagram-tilin kanssa, jota opinnäytetyön tekijä hallinnoi. Tärkein tavoite tutkimuksessa oli syventyä Instagram-markkinointiin ja oppia käyttämään Instagramia oikeaoppisesti markkinointivälineenä. Toinen tavoite oli luoda menestyvä Instagram-markkinointisuunnitelma Musti ja Mirri Kaarinan Instagram-tilille ja toteuttaa suunnitelma yhden kuukauden ajaksi.

Aineisto tutkimukseen kerättiin eri kirjallisista lähteistä, Instagram-sisällöstä ja Internetistä, Teoria kuvaa myös ne perus markkinointisuunnitelmat, jotka sovellettiin Musti ja Mirri Kaarinan Instagram-tilin markkinointisuunnitelmaan. Empiirinen aineisto kerättiin haastatteluilla, jotka suoritettiin kahden suomalaisen Instagram-vaikuttajan kanssa.

Opinnäytetyön menetelmä oli monimenetelmätutkimus. Markkinointisuunnitelma Musti ja Mirri Kaarinan Instagram-tilille onnistui menestyksekkäästi ensisijaisen aineiston tukemana. Päälöydökset, jotka havaittiin markkinointisuunnitelmaa laadittaessa olivat: miten saavuttaa ammattimainen yritysprofiili, miten suunnitella sisältösuunnitelma kalenteri ja miten hallinnoida sen jokaista osaa. Markkinointisuunnitelman toimeksiannon jälkeiset tulokset osoittavat, että Instagram-markkinointisuunnitelma on hyödyllinen Musti ja Mirri Kaarinan Instagram-tilillä ja sen hallinnointi on helpompaa sisältösuunnitelma kalenterin avulla. Instagram-vaikuttajien haastatteluiden vastaukset vakuuttivat, että markkinointisuunnitelmaa tehtäessä käytettyjen aineistojen lähteet olivat hyödyllisiä. Kumpikaan haastatteluiden Instagram-vaikuttajista ei ollut aikaisemmin käsitellyt markkinointisuunnitelmaa Instagram-tilillään, mutta luokittelisi sen hyödylliseksi tilin hallintaa varten. Opinnäytetyön tuloksena annettiin suositus jatkotutkimukselle, sillä Instagram kehittyä koko ajan sekä uusia toimintoja voi ilmestyä. Kaarinan Instagram-tilille luodun markkinointisuunnitelman tehokkaiden tulosten ansiosta suositellaan myös muille Turun-alueen Musti ja Mirri-liikkeille laatia markkinointisuunnitelma omille Instagram-tililleen.

AVAINSANAT:

Marketing, Digital Marketing, Social Media, Instagram, Musti & Mirri

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS (OR) SYMBOLS

B2C = Business to consumer

B2B = Business to business

IG = Instagram

ROI = Return on investment

Q&A = Question and answer

1 INTRODUCTION

Social media has a vast influence in today's world. It allows users to have access to unrestricted flow of information, sharing whatever content and connecting with other users. (Amedie, 2015) Social media industry is extending continually and appears to be permanent platform for individuals and businesses both. (Smith, 2015)

1.1. Background and research motivation

The topic of the research molded itself from my personal interests and current work events. Social media marketing is a broad field of information and a concept which keeps growing. Knowledge in this field is necessary when considering future work opportunities, so I wanted to create my research around the subject. Also, I wanted the study to be meaningful, it was natural to think of ways for me to apply it into real work. After many topic suggestions and discussions, Instagram marketing came as the best topic choice for me.

Personal motivation behind the research is my previous knowledge and usage of the application and seeing the results of marketing efficiency by using Instagram as a promoting tool. This will also give me a great opportunity to utilize the information later in business life. Musti & Mirri Kaarina is my current workplace, and I have a full access to the Instagram account. That way I can get information and data about the events on the account, as well as create new posts that would be beneficial for both, the store, and my research.

The importance of business Instagram account is gaining more visibility and followers, be cognizable and available for the businesses' customer base; increase customer base and keep customers updated. Being visible and present in Instagram is likely to attract new followers, that way possibly new customers. By fulfilling customer needs can have a positive effect to store sales and customer count, which could increase by effective Instagram marketing. To be able to utilize Instagram as a business tool requires a deeper understanding of social media marketing. Also, from a customers' perspective, most people would agree that social media accounts for companies are making it easier to shop and compare products, services and overall look of the company between the competitors. (Smith, 2015) (Siu, 2018)

1.1 Purpose of thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to pursue a deeper understanding of Instagram marketing and how to utilize it best as a marketing tool. The study aims to discover how Instagram marketing works and put in practice using the case company's Instagram account.

The primary objective of the research is to get a deeper understanding of Instagram marketing and how it works. Second objective for the research is to apply Instagram's functions/campaign as a marketing tool for the case company Musti & Mirri Kaarina. The aim for the research is to answer the following research questions:

- What is/ how to create a successful Instagram marketing plan?
- How to increase number of followers and engagement in case company Instagram page?
- How to improve Instagram presence?

Lack of visibility and followers on the case company Musti & Mirri Kaarina's Instagram account can be identified as a research problem.

1.3. Case company

Musti & Mirri is the biggest pet equipment and service selling retail business in Nordic countries and the fourth (MustiJaMirri, 2019) largest in Europe with turnover of over 103,7 million euros in 2019 and estimated annual growth of 6,5%. (Taloussanomat, 2019) It has over 250 stores all over Scandinavia, and 106 of them operates in Finland. Musti Group is a limited liability company, but some of the stores are franchise companies. The company also has an online store and mutual social media channels under the name Musti ja Mirri. (Musti&Mirri, 2019)



Picture 1, Company Finnish Logo



Picture 2, Company National Logo, (Musti & Mirri Logo, 2020)

The business sells pet supplies mainly dogs and cats, but they also have a small department reserved for goods and products for small animals such as guinea pigs, rabbits, birds and fishes. It operates in Finland, Sweden and Norway, but most of the

stores are located in Finland. Musti Group has 104 franchising companies in Finland, a license granted, from the business owner to an individual, who licenses its business name and operating methods. This means that the licensed individual becomes a business owner to the business. (Suomen Franchising yhdistys RY, 2019) (Seid, 2018) Musti Group provides a well-being service for dogs called Trimmis Pet Spa. These services include fur trimming, nail clipping, vet-services, dietician, massage, physiotherapist and behaving school. There are 17 Trimmis Pet Spas in Finland and altogether over 50 different spas in the Nordic countries. (MustiJaMirri, 2019)

Musti Group's main marketing strategy is to make pets and their owners' life more fun, safe and easy. They want to support the pets and their owners' daily life in every way possible. The businesses marketing initiatives one point is to update registered customers via sales texts and newsletter emails. Their aim is to build long-lasting relationships with customers and be the business they turn to when it comes to their pets. The company has collective campaigns and store-layouts, which every store must obey the best way they can considering space and selection of products every store has. In stores, every store manager does their individual marketing plan and goals every month, based on how the previous month has succeeded. The store manager must consider which section of sales and marketing they need to focus most on the upcoming month. These marketing plans are always approved by region-manager who manages all stores in specific region. For every store seasonal themes and bigger sale campaigns for example express, are all common in every store. Musti Group theme colors are green and white, and customers can recognize the brand from them. The logo also has a cartoon cat and dog. Sweden and Norway have their own blueprints when it comes to marketing plans, but the concept is very similar to Finland's. The business also offers Pohjantähti pet-insurance for dogs and cats. (MustiJaMirri, 2019)

The focus is on Musti & Mirri store, Kaarina, Turku, and is also my place of work. The store has been classified as a small, "P0"- store, which means small size, only the basic and some of the exclusive products and equipment are on store for sale. The business still has its own perks and customer base because of its location. Musti & Mirri Kaarina also organizes small events such as treat tasting- day for dogs or sponsors shows for the local participants. Additionally, it offers maintenance services for dogs such as nail cutting and paw waxing. They also have their own social media accounts in Facebook and Instagram. (Musti&Mirri, 2019)

1.4. Structure of thesis

The thesis consists of multiple chapters in which the subject is first introduced, following with a theoretical background, empirical study, research methods and finally research findings and conclusion.

The introduction explains the objective of the research as well as personal motivation behind the research, key objectives and case company's information. The next chapter includes deeper content to the subject, in which I explicate the power of visual marketing and Instagram marketing. It also includes a brief overview of the app as well as gives more insights of business to consumer Instagram marketing. The following chapter presents the case company Musti & Mirri Kaarinas Instagram account and the empirical study which is conducted using the mentioned account. This chapter presents the initial stage of the account and the very detailed marketing plan designed for it with the goal of gaining followers and visibility and therefor gaining deeper customer relationships and profit.

The following chapter introduces the current stage of the account and the changes that were made, after implementing the marketing plan. The chapter after that, shows the methods used in conducting the research and marketing plan. Then, the research analysis is conducted and the interviews with the Instagram influencers are presented and those responses are then analyzed. The conclusion chapter is the final part of the thesis, including validity and reliability of the study and researchers own learning assessment.

2 INSTAGRAM MARKETING

2.1. Social media in today's business world



Figure 1, Social media in business world by Sofia Larte

Social media presence in today's businesses is almost inevitable and its usage is increasing continually with significance. It is a modern-day equipment for sharing news, promoting products and services, and connecting with customers in real time. It is also a great platform for businesses to communicate with customers and inform them details in such subjects that are more current and specific, than for example in a TV commercial. There are many different social media channels which to choose from and every business must find the most suitable channel for them. Mostly used social media channels in Finnish businesses are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and YouTube, in which Facebook takes the lead. (Niko, 2018) Social media has changed the environment for both businesses that have social media presence and for those that have not. In social media, users share content with wide audience as well as opinions and conversations. Information also runs quickly and communicating and sharing news is fast and easy. Majority of today's businesses have adopted this business strategy and learned to take advantage of the marketing tool suitable for their business. (Siu, 2018)

2.1.1 Facebook

Transactions and social media behavior are different in every social media channel. (Timespro, 2018) Facebook is the number one social media channel where people connect and share messages, pictures and videos. (Marrs, 2018) With 1.74 billion active users, it continually develops as a marketing platform for different kinds of use. (Zephoria, 2019) Facebook is familiar to almost anyone and has a lot of perks when it comes to connecting with customers and gaining visibility to the company.

It has over 50 million businesses registered, amongst them are small businesses attempting to enlarge their operation and establish presence. When it comes to marketing why Facebook outperforms other social media channels because it has it all. For example, communicating possibilities are wide, from a private message to group and public announcement, event creating, advertising, sharing pictures and videos, statistics and data. Their campaigns can be made for certain audiences and a special tool could be used, which the company can modify based on suitability. Also, like other social media channels, Facebook invoices a minimum cost compared to keeping own website. Connecting and answering to clients through social media channels like Facebook, might even be more efficient and faster than e-mailing or more traditional way of communicating. It benefits both, the company and the customer. (Business Queensland, 2016) (Marshall, 2018) (Dudhareija, 2017) There are a lot of successful businesses in Facebook and almost on top of the list is Coca-Cola. It's popularity and innovative and emotive marketing strategy has brought it 107.42 million followers. (Statista, 2018) They post regularly and answer people's comments and questions quickly. Since the brand is popular worldwide it exploits every country's celebrities to connect with its audience even more personal level. (Pratap, 2018)

2.1.2 Twitter

With 1.6 million active users, Twitter is a realistic and useful way to build and gain visibility for any business. Twitter is a social media channel where unlike most social media channels, everything is shared publicly. (Lake, 2018) Twitter allows its' users to share current public messages, called "tweets", which shows for the company's target audience, whose accounts that follow the company's profile. The immediacy of tweets shared has made the channel most popular when sharing current news and happenings

in different kinds of environments. Twitter is also all about freedom of speech, so even if the company doesn't have its' own Twitter account, someone might still tweet about it for other users to see.

When using Twitter as a marketing tool, personal, popular brands and personalities can have the cutting edge to utilize the channel compared to others. (Wired, 2018) Being likable and authentic on the internet can have a huge benefit to gaining a fan-base and that way increasing business opportunities. One of the leading brands by followers on Twitter is Starbucks. A while back they were starring the news with customers debating whether it was Christmassy enough, which ended up being a worldwide vote with the hashtag #merrychristmasstarbucks. The brand also does an amazing job with engaging and showcasing their followers which makes the company number one in Twitter. (Wired, 2018) Brands and businesses should always keep track of if, and what people are tweeting about them, in order to keep up with the public opinion and keeping a good image. Customers want to be informed, and quick and easily available information is the advantage of this social media channel. It's also the best way to inform and engage with the company's customer base and interacting with them. Sometimes unfortunately the immediacy and publicity of tweets can have a harmful impact if the person tweets something out of anger or rush. (Wired, 2018) (Ayres, 2015)

2.1.3 YouTube

YouTube with 2 billion users per month, is one of the channels every business owner should consider. It is the most popular video platform on the internet. (Mohsin, 2020) For businesses, YouTube is a great channel to for example launch new products or express the brands personality in creative ways and monitor feedback. Also, by being visible in YouTube, the company can gain authority, reliability and recognition for itself. Since YouTube videos have turned from a few minute clips to even couple of hours long videos, companies have had more possibilities in marketing themselves (besides from their own content) with commercials in the beginning, middle and end of each video. The longer the video, the more commercial space it has. From a consumer perspective, it might be annoying, and that's why YouTube also provides premium version of itself without commercials in the videos, with only 11,99 euros a month. (Muropaketti, 2018) One of the most successful companies on YouTube is Blendtec – a company which sells blenders. Blendtec found an amazing and funny way to promote its blenders with a video

series called “Will it blend?”, in which they blended up new iPhones that had recently arrived to the market. The company gained a lot of subscribers in YouTube and many of their videos have over a million views. Also, RedBull, an energy drink brand which is all about energetic and active lifestyle has done remarkable promoting for itself in YouTube. With over 4 million subscribers, they make videos featuring athletes and daredevils who perform extreme stunts in different kind of environments. (Omnicoagency, 2018) (Small Business, 2015) (Patel, 2015)

Social media marketing exists in a democratic environment which has shifted the power from the business to the individual and connecting with customers have become more important. (Siu, 2018) For those businesses that have these channels, have a great advantage over those who have not. Over 95% of social media users from age 18 to 34, follow a brand in some social media site. For those businesses that have not adopted this concept, there are a lot of doors unopened. (Riley, 2017)

2.2. Power of visual marketing

Visual marketing is a powerful way to attract consumers. It refers to exploiting pictures and images: visual content for marketing. For creating visual content, it is crucial to understand how we see things. The human eye takes small chunks at a time and needs time to process them before moving on to the next chunk. The same effect is essential to create with visual marketing. This means that by gradually building the visual content it makes it easier for consumer to process, understand and absorb. If the content is too busy with lots of colors and shapes and details, it might make one to look away. By using both visuals and text, the power of the message enhances. The best kind of visual marketing is when a consumer can understand the meaning and the information of the content with a quick look. (Diamond, 2013)

Visual marketing is simple instead of telling, showing. Pictures and images create more interest and engagement in social media and same goes with marketing. For a consumer just to see the advertisement is not enough for marketers and companies. They want their customers to engage with the advertisement in some way; by subscribing, downloading a sale coupon or making a purchase. With visual content, those targets are easier and quicker to reach. (Hendriks, 2019)

According to a study conducted by Social Media Examiner (Examiner, 2018) 32% of marketers say that pictures are the key factor when it comes to visual marketing. (Mawhinney, 2018) 90% of consumers claim that use of image influences their

purchasing decision. (Farooq, 2018) Amongst pictures, other general and most used forms of visual marketing are videos, gifs, infographics, memes, screen shots and presentations. (Joyce, 2018)

Instagram “stories” are a partially new feature in which a picture or a video clip can be posted to a special section accessed from the profile picture (view Figure 2 on page 10) and remain in there for 24 hours before disappearing for good, unless saved to a folder of stories (also view Figure 2 on page 10). Stories can also have special features in them such as polls, boomerangs, layouts and filters. They gained a huge popularity over some of the features listed ahead. There is no arguing with the claim when viewing the list of huge brands who uses them as a part of their marketing plan and exploits them also when connecting with clients. (Chernev, 2019) Nevertheless, any form of visual marketing is what attracts and gets the viewers’ attention quickly. The reason why it is a beneficial way to market, is because it gets the message across efficiently. In fact, visual content is shared the most amongst businesses and personal users, which means that the amount of content available is enormous. Still, the best content creators have a chance of distinguishing themselves from the others in a positive way. (Farooq, 2018)

2.3. Instagram in brief

Instagram is a social media channel used by individuals, businesses and brands. It is made for sharing photos and videos and following other accounts from a smartphone and computer. (Moreau, 2018) When setting up the account for the business, many points need to be covered carefully and planned. Once the account is set up online, it can be modified, but many people might have already seen the errors. Creating an Instagram strategy made for a specific company will benefit the company. Deciding and agreeing on what kind of goals the company wants to achieve with the account among of identifying the target audience is one of the first things on the list. (Newberry, 2019) The example profile used in this chapter is the main Instagram account of Musti&Mirri. The company has own social media marketing team to manage the account.

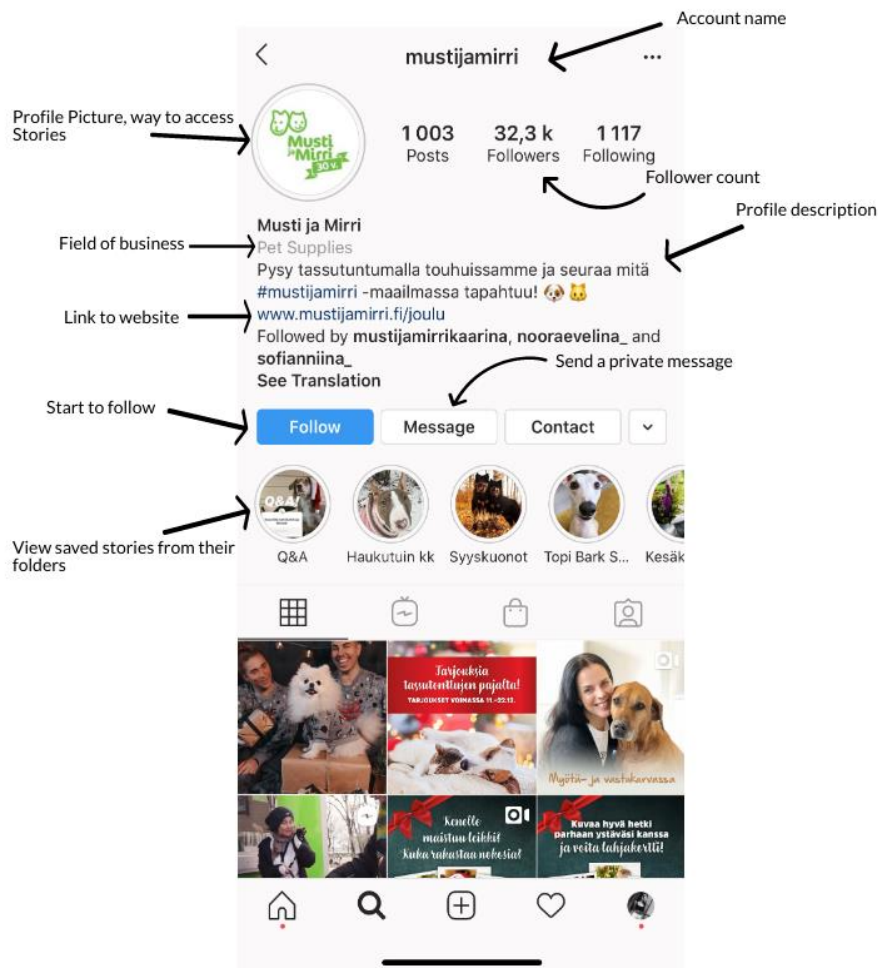


Figure 2, mustijamirri Profile screenshot, 20.12.19

2.3.1. Pictures and videos

Instagram is a platform for visual marketing via images and videos. Especially when it comes to marketing, the importance of visual content which is clever, versatile, shows good quality and most importantly displays the company and its theme, can define how customers are viewing the company. The idea to create coherent content which still shows diverse and excitement for the consumers and might compel them into engaging by commenting or liking or pursue the goal of purchasing products. (Moore, 2018)

By bringing emotions and a storyline through pictures and videos for the consumer, can get more connected to the business and the businesses activities. Instagram marketing is more captivating when the business allows its followers to join them for their

adventures. Also, by creating and devoting to a certain theme, which links all the posts together, for example a color theme, minimalism or a collage makes the Instagram account pleasant and coherent. Even if the businesses social media person would not be a professional photographer, a few guidelines and advises for taking photos should be adopted, since the photos are selling an image of the brand. (Thomas, 2018) Guidelines, such as finding and being able to use a good lighting, knowing how to size the images, finding the suitable color scheme, choosing a subject, learning to utilize optical illusions and shapes, and selecting a filter if needed. (Thomas, 2018)

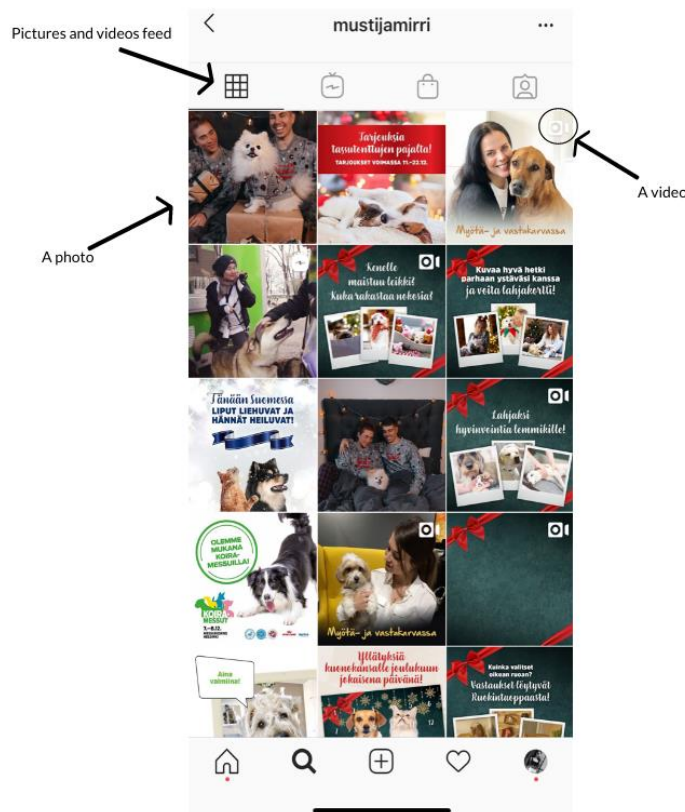


Figure 3, mustijamirri, Content feed screenshot, 20.12.19

2.3.2 Followers

Every account has follower count which shows how many followers the account has and how many accounts it is following. The account can be public, which shows all the content the account has posted, or private, which doesn't show any of the content, except for followers. To be able to follow a private account, the following needs to be requested, and the account must accept the following. (Moreau, 2018)

In Instagram, the most popular brands and influencers have the largest follower count. When operating millions of followers, technical tools such HootSuite (Hootsuite, 2020) and Iconosquare (Iconosquare, 2020) are helpful and useful with for example scheduling posting times and tracking and growing Instagram follower count. These apps charge 29,99€ per month (Hootsuite, 2020) (Iconosquare, 2020) and are made for professional use for businesses who want to improve their social media marketing plan. The apps give tips for marketing and insight to transactions of the account. Apps like Ig Analyzer and Reports are beneficial and useful for accounts working in smaller volume. The apps charge 1,99€ per week (Apple Store, 2020) but gives huge amount of different type of data about follower gain, lose, users who have blocked, profile stalkers, followers who are not following back or I do not follow back. Other features: Followers + gives are profile stalkers, story insight pack, engagement pack, insights pack and graphics pack. Profile stalkers shows the accounts which are often visiting your account and story insight pack gives insight to top and least- viewers as well as most and least viewed stories. Engagement pack shows the best and the worst followers measured by comments and likes. Insights pack shows most popular, liked and commented media as well as insight about follower history. Reports + is a great tool and can be utilized in the data collecting phase of this thesis. It gives needed information and works with suitable volume for the case company's IG account. Amongst the apps listed above, there are various other app options guiding and giving help for IG users and marketers to improve their content and marketing strategy. These technical tools are designed to build and track enormous follower base, increase engaging through likes, comments and follows and all on relying on machine-learning algorithms. All these tools can increase the businesses follower count even in a short period of time. (Erin, 2019) (Olenski, 2018) (App Store, 2019)

Even though these apps are very helpful and beneficial, there are some threats. Marketers should not fully and only rely on them, since some of the apps (especially the ones free of charge) could be shut down suddenly. Also choosing the right kind of app to match with the needs of the company might require testing amongst few apps before finding the most suitable one. (Expert, 2019)

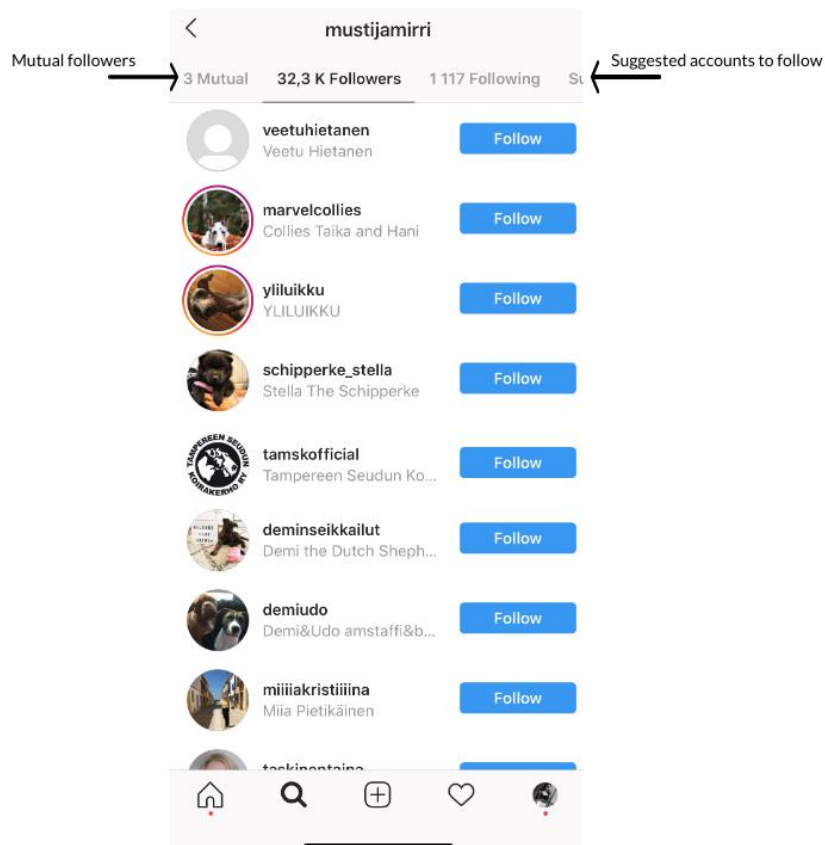


Figure 4, mustijamirri, Followers screenshot, 20.12.19

2.3.3 User connection

One of the important features in Instagram is connecting with other users through sharing pictures, videos, likes and comments. Also, businesses need to identify the need of connecting with the audience by answering most of the comments or direct messages they receive.

Posting time is other important factor a company needs to identify. Since there is no one specific hour which is the best to post, the company should do some testing or benchmarking to find out the best time suitable for them to post in order to reach as much audience as possible.

Adapting a posting schedule is relevant, after acquiring an audience for an account, it needs maintaining. The pace of posting needs to be controlled and suitable under the circumstances. When the company's account reaches a good follower base, the audience expects to see posts from it consistently, but it is also crucial that the company doesn't drown their audience with constant posting. That might lead in the worst-case scenario, to a customer unfollowing the account. (Newberry, 2019)

Boosting the user connection especially for brands and business accounts in Instagram is a new feature, Instagram Shopping. It is making it easier for consumers to view products and have a straight access to the brands website to purchase them. (Lee, 2019)

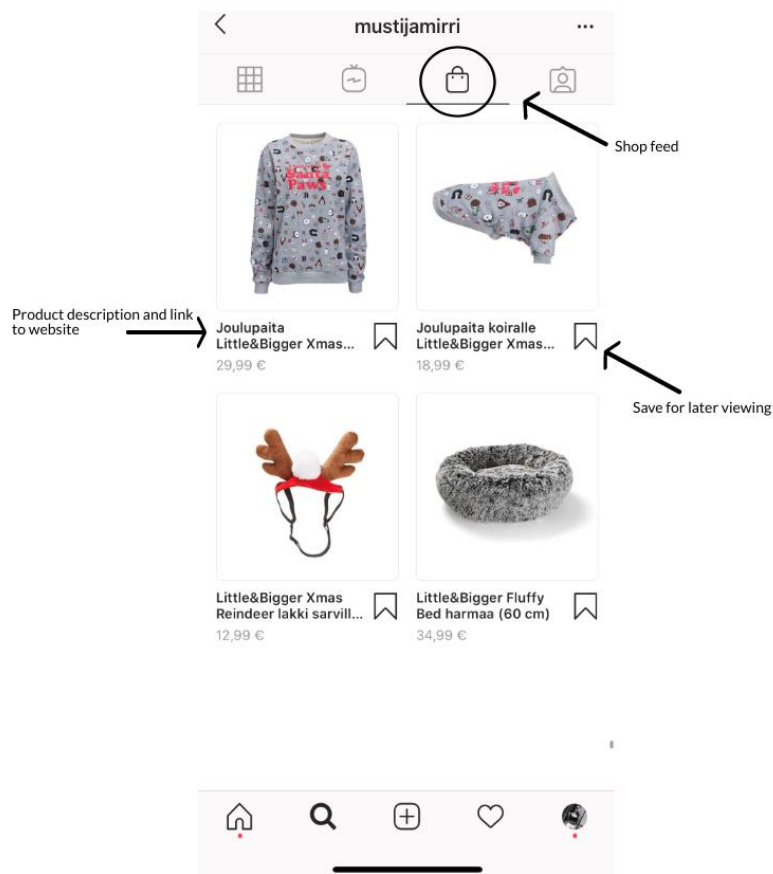


Figure 5, mustijamirri, Shop screenshot, 20.12.19

2.3.4 IG stories and IG live

One of Instagram's special features is IG stories. The account can add number of pictures and video clips which shows the audience for 24 hours and it automatically delete itself. Stories will not appear in the main Instagram feed, but will show on top of the main feed page as the accounts profile picture, to let followers know that the account has created an Instagram story. (González, 2018) There is also a possibility to save published stories and create own folder for them, so that followers can view them at any times like any other content. (Bojkov, 2019) Companies can utilize IG stories in their marketing plan daily in multiple ways. Promoting and giving teasers about new products, product demonstrations and posting flash sales or sale codes are profitable ways to exploit IG stories. To gain a deeper connection with the customers, the company can post "behind the scenes" material or have a Q&A session and request questions for their customers they would like an answer to. It is also a great feature for promoting upcoming events and sharing any kind of announcements. Instagram also gives different features in the stories, which can be utilized in marketing, such as polls and boomerangs. IG allows 15-second video clips or photos posted in the stories, but the amount of posts in IG stories is unlimited. (Cronin, 2019) (Carbone, 2019) (O'neall, 2019)

Case company's IG account will utilize IG stories in its marketing plan for this thesis. Other ways than listed above which the account could post about is for example dog training tips and advises, product suggestions from the store dogs, raffles and competitions with prizes a chance to participate on a lottery. Due to other study about following four market leading pet stores' Instagram stories for a month, proves that they are a relevant and important part of daily marketing strategy. Stories also help connect with customers and establishing lasting customer relationships.

The study reveals that high posting volume is usually preferred and most of the stories also included swipe up-feature, meaning that the story includes a direct link to something, for example a product which is advertised in the post. Other interesting finding was that the content that was posted was mainly related to advises, customer connection and just overall fun content, rather than posting about sales or products. The article was written, and the study conducted by Lindsay Cosner in October 2018. (Cosner, 2018)

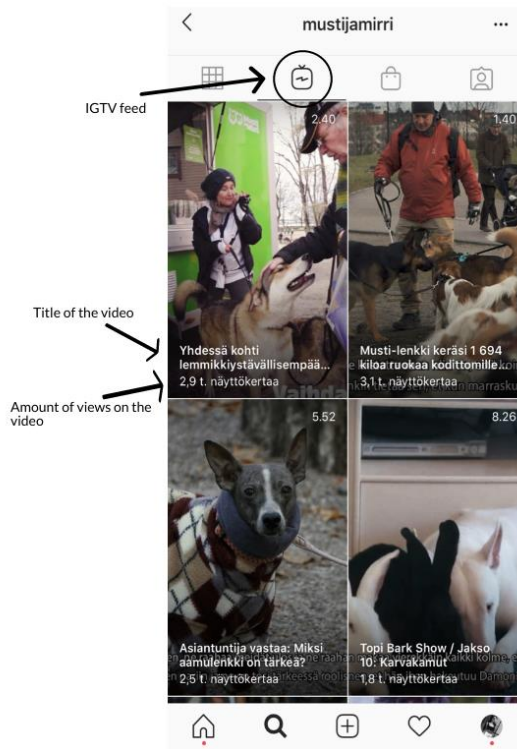


Figure 6, mustijamirri, Stories screenshot, 20.12.19

2.3.5 Instagram TV

IGTV (Instagram tv) is Instagram's latest update to the app. It is one of the features, a video channel, in which the content is designed to be longer than in IG stories or video posts. The users can share one-minute previews of their IGTV posts, which after the viewers can decide if they want to keep watching the post. The preview feature has been beneficial for brands especially, since they can get attention from followers without them leaving the app. (Tien, 2019) Additionally, IGTV is overall a great way for brands to promote themselves with versatile content and gain attention from followers. For example, luxury brand Louis Vuitton published their whole runway show from the beginning to end, with sneak peaks to behind the scenes. The brand also posts interesting interview and introduction videos of famous models showing their life in big

cities, content which attracts the consumers and is exclusively from the brand. (Weber,



2018)

Figure 7, mustijamirri, IGTV screenshot, 20.12.19

2.3.6. Hashtags

Despite many features in Instagram, hashtags are still an effective way to gain visibility for posts and rein them to specific target audience. That is the reason why they should certainly be part of the company's Instagram marketing strategy. Posts which include hashtags have more engaging possibilities compared to the posts which do not. (Chacon, 2019). Using hashtags which are relevant to the content which the company's account is posting, is one of the best ways to gain more targeted audience for the company. There is a possibility to list up to 30 hashtags under one post, which is way more than is often used. Though, the more hashtags are listed under a post, the more possibility it has reaching audience. (Chacon, 2019)

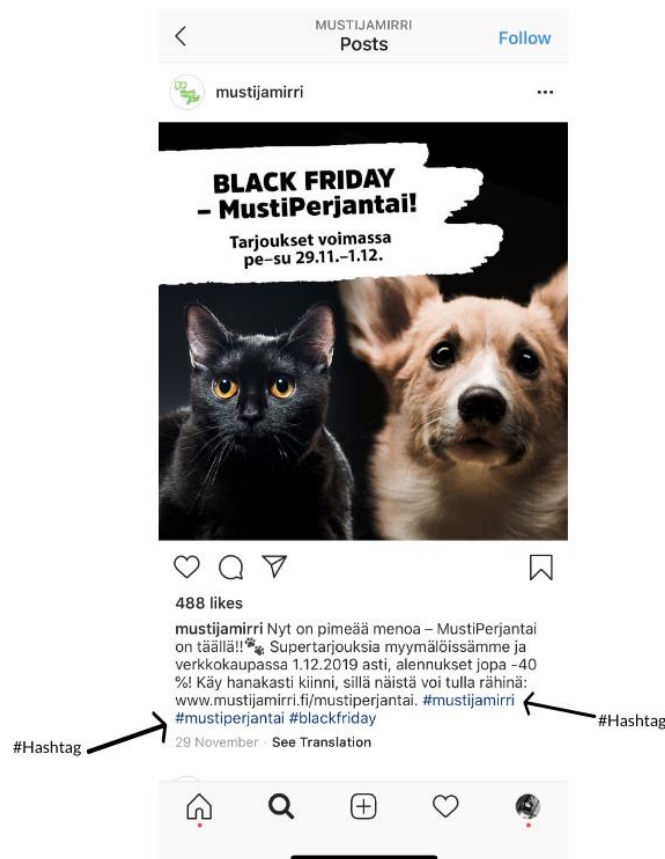


Figure 8, mustijamirri, Black Friday, 29.11.19

2.4. Business to consumer Instagram marketing

To use the suitable social media channel for a company is crucial. Instagram is counted among social media applications, in which its users can connect with each other through sharing pictures and videos, comment and like them, and via direct messaging which only shows for the participants of the messages. The application is primarily designed to be used on a smartphone, but it can also be managed on a computer. It is one of the biggest social media channels with over 800 million monthly active users. (Bullas, 2018)

The case company, Musti & Mirri Kaarina has two social media channels: Facebook and Instagram. The reason why the focus is on the Instagram account in this thesis, is because the Instagram account was registered later than the Facebook account, which already has a satisfying follower base and more visibility on the internet. As such, the Instagram account would require more advertisement and recognition in order to be more useful and profitable to the store. To a B2C business like Musti & Mirri Kaarina, Instagram

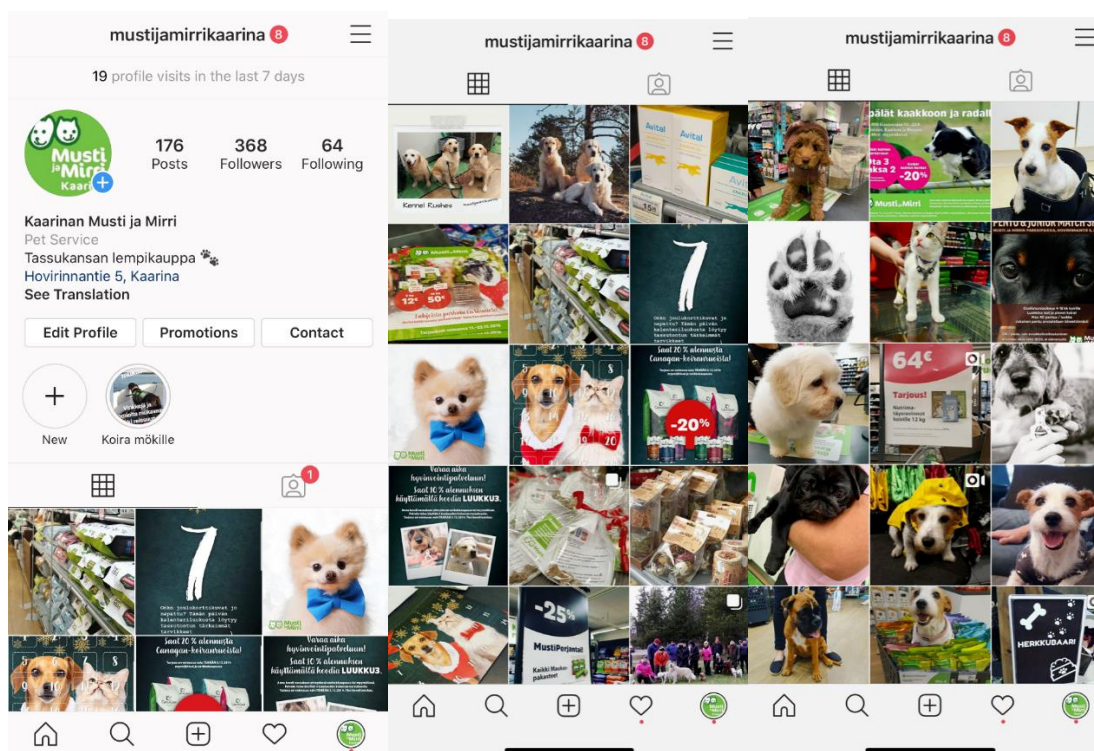
is suitable social media channel for advertisement and promotion. The current IG user profile is @mustijamirrikaarina and it is more thoroughly presented in the following chapter 3, Musti & Mirri Kaarina's Instagram on page 20. In the future, the goal is to offer customers real-time photos and information about new products, services, events, sales and whatever seems to be worth posting for. That way the store would gain more sales, visibility and establish new customer relationships as well as keep its' regular customers updated. (Bullas, 2018) A powerful way for small businesses like Musti & Mirri Kaarina to promote in IG, is to make an Instagram story, one of the features in the application. (Furness, 2017)

Instagram is extremely beneficial social media platform for B2C businesses (Lua, 2019). The visual side of IG is one of the aspects that makes B2C marketers prefer the application over B2B marketers. In 2018, the ROI potential of Instagram can be very profitable and valuable for the company. There are at least two major sources of ROI; likes and comments, and referral traffic, when connecting the Instagram profile link to the company's website. (Bullas, 2018) Also, there is not lot of verbal expressions involved especially when sharing pictures in Instagram, the business needs to put a lot of effort in the pictures and advertisements to make them interesting and eye catching. By applying the right tools and proper techniques, Instagram can evolve into a very successful marketing channel. (Furness, 2017) (Melamed, 2018)

3 MUSTI&MIRRI KAARINA'S INSTAGRAM

3.1. Initial stage

This chapter will first present and then analyze the initial stage of Musti & Mirri Kaarina's IG-page. Musti & Mirri Kaarina's Instagram account was created in July 2018 and gained 366 followers since then without any planned marketing strategy. The store's account's target audience are active pet owners from all age groups. The account also has many pet followers, accounts created under a pet identity on behalf of their owners, which are surprisingly common accounts in Instagram.



Picture 1, Picture 2, and Picture 3, mustijamirrikaarina, Main Page, 01.01.20

When looking deeper at the account profile, it already has almost all the features which are required for a good business profile. Profile picture (figure 9) is simple, which is clear and recognizable. It is also identical to all the other Musti & Mirri stores from the Western sales region, so there is no need to modify it. The profile description holds name, service field, description of business as a written sentence and an address to the location of the store. Next when looking at the feed, bright various colors (especially the bright lime green, which is also the company color) and good photo quality are the first features that

draws the attention. Posts are mainly photos of visitor dogs, products, sales, and current announcements, which indicates that the content focus is product-centric and user-generated. The theme of the account appears as a combination of bright colors, simple, fun and uplifting content of the store's activities and products.

The account did not have any previous marketing plan or content calendar, to show in the feed. The posts do not have a specific theme for example, and they have been posted whenever without thinking about the best posting times. Also, some of the posts visibly appealing, as it shows that they are not carefully thought or finished, appearing messy amongst the posts.

3.2. Content marketing for IG page

There are mainly four types of content to post in Instagram. Most commonly, IG feed content, which includes pictures (max. 10 pictures per post), a video (max. 1 minute long), GIF-photos and moving pictures made by Boomerang, an Instagram built-in feature, as well as Layout, which is designed for combining more than one photo in the same picture. Other forms of content are IG live, IGTV and stories. (Runyan, 2019)

As stated section 3.1, the content posted is mostly product-centric and user-generated, which fits well with the field of business and the spirit of the company. The account has exploited half of the content options: IG feed content and stories. Also, most liked pictures and videos are ones with a dog in them, which indicates that the follower base is keener on the emotional pet-, user-generated content, rather than updates about new products or sales. (Claveria, 2019)

A useful model for marketing known as AIDA model, can help determinate the cognitive stages the buyer visits during the purchasing process. The model and the stages can be utilized also when considering content marketing and creating content. (Hanlon, 2019) Even though the model is archaic, it fits perfectly to the study and can be well utilized in it. See Figure 9, assist to visualize it. AIDA consist of four words and are listed in the following: Attention, firstly gaining audience's attention. An exciting post which captures the customers attention and takes notice could be for example an announcement of a new product or service introduced in a stimulating way, with the addition to for example join a waiting list, get a coupon or participate in a contest via following the account or sending a message. Second stage is gaining audiences Interest into the company, a product or service. It can be built by increasing the customers interest level with for example sharing behind-the-scenes material or by answering comments and engaging

with the audience. By engaging, the business can also gain beneficial data of the interests and preferences of their target audience. Following that is Desire, for when the audiences desire for the product or service is awoken. Inevitably, it is in the human nature: to desire something we see and do not have. Desire usually pursues after interest, leading to a feel of need to contain the target of interest. For businesses, being and having objects available is the key, as it enhances the desire for the product or service. Lastly Action, or when the audience decides to take action: make a purchasing decision.

If the first three stages are conducted correctly, the call of action is highly likely. The AIDA model can be integrated into the marketing plan of the case IG account by viewing the Instagram insights to research data on the account transactions. By them, it is possible to determinate the suitable steps which need to be encountered for understanding the customer deeper. (Miles, Instagram Power, 2014)

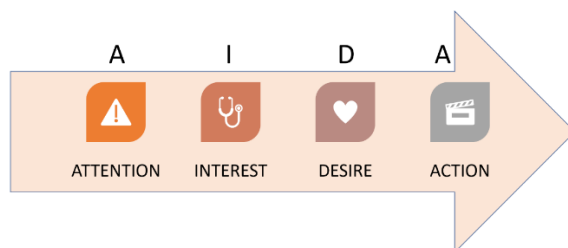


Figure 9, the AIDA model by Sofia Larte 2020 (Miles, Instagram Power, 2014)

Content calendar is a helpful tool to use for planning all content activity ahead. Creating and using a content calendar benefits the account with ensuring that all posted media is in lined with the marketing strategy and benefits the company by gaining best visibility and best engaging. It also assists with keeping the content relevant to the company's campaigns, promotions, events, announcements and focused on the target audience. And even though the content is the key, posting includes many other aspects such as posting time, date, caption which includes hashtags, emojis and bit.ly link (a short version of web site link). All these aspects will be easier to monitor and keep posting schedule organized with the help of a content calendar. (Smith, 2018)

3.3. Marketing plan and campaigns

When building a well operating Instagram marketing strategy for the company, it adds value to the brand and its' customer relationships. Gaining visibility and establishing new customer relationships remains as the main purpose, but also engaging with current and old customers is crucial, in order to keep them returning. When it comes to creating an effective marketing strategy for Instagram, few main points need to be covered. In the basic Instagram marketing plan created by (Miles, 2014) consist of four main steps. The anchor, the offer, the visual curator and the chemical X. In this chapter those steps are explained and the IG marketing strategy for Musti & Mirri Kaarina's IG account is created based on suggestions from Miles, literature review and exploiting the content calendar.

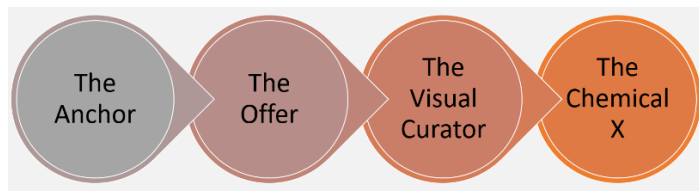


Figure 10, Basic marketing plan by Sofia Larte 2020 (Miles, Instagram Power, 2014)

First steps to creating the marketing plan is setting up a proper business profile which sends a professional tone of the company. This is the Anchor of the plan. Brands often most likely use their own names as account names or add the title “official” at the end of it to validate their account from any fake or fan accounts. Using the brands own name for the account makes it easier for people to find and be more recognizable online. (Miles, Instagram Power, 2014) This is the offer of the plan, since the absolute best launch plan is to having existing customers find and follow the company, hence the accounts followers will be expose to the account for their followers by liking the posts. The profile should also clearly tell what the company is about. With limited 150 characters to use, the profile description (figure 2) needs to have all necessary information without also being too long or boring to read. Business profiles in Instagram has a separate section for the location address and a web-site link. A proper business profile (including content wise) and profile description includes the following:

| |
|---|
| • Company name as an account name |
| • Company name in the bio description |
| • A clear, simple and recognizable logo |
| • Some type of fun, exciting and inspiring bio description of the company |
| • Link to the website |
| • What the company does, field of business |
| • Excellent quality in the posts |
| • A common theme |
| • Overall understanding of the profile, content and followers |

Table 2, A proper business profile requirements (Kolowich, 2019) (Patel, 2018) (Miles, Instagram Power, 2014)

Image sharing strategy is one of the fundamentals of overall marketing strategy and a vital part of the company's success. Next the company needs to decide what is the most suitable approach for the industry, in terms of sharing in social media. This is the visual curator part of the plan. Few questions need to be answered in order to discover the right approach:

| |
|--|
| • What is the target audience? |
| • What kind of content to share? |
| • How often to post? |
| • What time (during the day) to post? |
| • What are the standards for quality and theme? |
| • Whose responsibility it is to approve them and operate the marketing plan? |

Table 3, The Visual Curator definition questions (Miles, Instagram Power, 2014)

By answering above questions, a company is closer to a solid goal and an effective Instagram marketing strategy. Appropriate posting times are also important part of the marketing strategy. They have an impact on how well the post will succeed in terms of how many followers it will reach (if a user follows many accounts but does not have time to scroll them, some of them might not reach them) and how many likes and comments it will receive. According to Later Blog (2020), mornings and afternoons are the best times to post, but it can also change depending on which day of the week it is. The analyze contained 12 million posts, various time zones from different countries and

accounts who have followers from 100 to million+. Posts which are made in the late mornings or afternoons have a better chance of succeeding versus the ones made in the late evenings, nights or early mornings. Generally, the best posting times are the ones when the target group and followers are online and checking their social media sites. (Loren, 2020)

The chemical X is something unique on the account which makes users follow the account and stay as a follower. (Miles, Instagram Power, 2014) It can be for example a view of the account managers private life or company, or a preview to upcoming products or services. In this case, the Musti & Mirri Kaarina's chemical X is most likely the high-quality and cute pet content, and general updates of the store especially for local followers.

Content calendar is a big part of the marketing strategy as it helps with the posting schedule and planning ahead instead of creating posts as they go, but they can also be added later to the calendar when they arise. With the help of the content calendar, it is assured that all of the aspects of the post are thought of and that all of the account holders have the same end goal in mind for the posts. Especially the posts which require a certain posting date or certain content are more easily manageable with the assistance of a content calendar. The details of the calendar template will be explained in the following chapter. Using all four forms of content is recommended in order to exploit Instagram's features to the fullest and gaining as much visibility and audience as possible. All planned posts will be applied to the content calendar, and the content will be selected and designed based on the data collection in Instagram insights, company campaign calendar content and with the help of AIDA model (figure 12). (Copypress, 2018)

Since Musti & Mirri Kaarina is part of a bigger limited liability company; Musti Group/Musti & Mirri, most of the biggest campaigns, promotions and sales comes from the company sales and marketing team and are mutual with all the stores in Finland. Sweden and Norway have their own campaign times and products, but the concept is very similar between the companies as all the content materials are available in Swedish also. There are two main campaigns every month. Those are according to the company policies, the Express campaign, in which stores have super offers and sales on multiple different products for all customers, and the Friends campaign, in which stores have offers, deals and sales for regular customers only. However, becoming a regular customer for free is possible in every store, so basically those offers can be for all customers also. Along with

the main campaigns there are some mutual scheduled posts from the Musti & Mirri marketing team, but rest of the campaign and event calendar is up for every store's team to design and create themselves. Every store creates a campaign calendar for the sale year, and the team decides a theme for every month and books and creates events. Those events can be for example: appearances from kennels who breed special breeds of cats, dogs or small animals, treat tasting day for dogs, a vet- lecture, a doggie painting day or anything exciting and different the team can think of. During the month of January 2020, which is the Instagram marketing strategy testing period, the store's campaign calendar is combined with the content calendar. This way Instagram marketing plan can be utilized with the campaign and event promotions. (Larte, 2018) (MustiJaMirri, 2019)

3.4. Implementing the marketing strategy

During January 2020 IG marketing plan was carried out and documented. The four stages of Miles's marketing plan were implemented into Musti & Mirri Kaarina's IG account. Also, the content calendar was filled and combined with the campaign and event calendar.

An official business account has authority, credibility and lets the current as well as potential followers know what the account is used for and what they could expect. (Miles, Instagram Power, 2014) The Anchor of the plan, which is the professional business account, is mainly achieved for the @mustijamirrikaarina account. Table 2 was used as a guide for the analyzing and improving the profile: Company name as an account name and company name visible in the bio description are the first things to cross off from the list. Recognizable and identical profile picture/logo with rest of the Musti & Mirri sales region, exciting, simple and fun bio description (Paw-nations favorite store and a paw emoji) and a field of business are also appearing correctly in the profile description. Content wise the photo quality and the theme meet the expectations and are contemplated to continue with in the required standards. Overall understanding of the profile, content and followers is the profile managers responsibility, which in this case is me. The only this visibly missing on the profile description is the web-site link to the main website of Musti & Mirri online store.

The screenshot shows the 'Edit Profile' interface for the Instagram account 'mustijamirrikaarina'. At the top, there are buttons for 'Cancel', 'Edit Profile', and 'Done'. Below this is the profile picture, a green circle with two white cat faces and the text 'Musti ja Mirri Kaarina'. A link 'Change profile photo' is below the picture. The profile information section includes: Name (Kaarinan Musti ja Mirri), Username (mustijamirrikaarina), Website (https://www.mustijamirri.fi/), and Bio (Tassukansan lempikauppa Paw-nations favorite store). Below this is the 'Public business information' section, which includes: Page (Kaarinan Musti ja Mirri), Category (Pet Service), Contact options (Email, Phone, Address), and Profile display (None hidden). The 'Private information' section at the bottom includes: Email address (kaarina@mustijamirri.fi) and Phone (+358400339771).

Figure 11, mustijamirrikaarina, Edit profile screenshot, 01.01.20

The content calendar plays the role of the visual curator, image sharing strategy, is the most significant part of the plan. For the content calendar template with features and details which goes into making an IG post was created. The template was created based on the suggestions from literature review. In the content calendar template, there are ten sections for each step for when creating and designing a post: date, time, picture, video, story/TV/live, campaign/event, caption, hashtag, emoji and a website link. Below is an appendix of the content calendar template:

| Date | Time | Picture | Video | Story/TV/live | Campaign/Event | Caption | Hashtag | Emoji | Website link |
|-----------|------|---------|-------|---------------|----------------|---------|---------|-------|--------------|
| January 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 3 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 4 | | | | | | | | | |

Table 2, Content calendar template for mustijamirrikaarina by Sofia Larte in Excel.

All sections of the calendar are further explained in the following and in the order that they are presented in the content calendar table above. Since posting time is a crucial part of the success of the post, it deserves its' own section in the calendar, to remind when the post needs to be posted. Based on Instagram insights, the best posting time for the account is after 12 pm, which means that all the posts will be scheduled to be published at that time and filled to the calendar in the section 'time'. When considering posting times, it is essential to discover the correct posting frequency also. For

businesses, the recommended frequency would be around one to three times per day, but what might work for some, might not work for the other, so it is key to adapt the right frequency with the amount of followers and the follower base. (Erin E. , 2019) For a smaller follower base, for example an account with less than a 1000-followers, daily posting might be too intense pace. Posting too often might be repulsive for followers or come across annoying, (Oprea, 2020) but on the other side, not posting often enough, might make followers forget about the account. For @mustijamirrikaarina, with less than 500-followers, two to three times per week seems like a reasonable amount to start with, slightly increasing the frequency towards the end of the testing period.

A picture is the most common content form used on an account and it is also the most popular one in terms of likes and engagement. Therefore, pictures are the main form of content and are used for main posts for the account. Video content is less common; there are only a few videos posted on the account. Despite the low number of videos, it has performed well, which implies that more video content would be beneficial to add on January's content calendar. Story, IGTV and live are the least used forms, which is why they also share a section in the calendar to keep it as simple and minimal as possible. Stories are the most used out of the three lastly mentioned. They are easy to post and design, with multiple different features such as Boomerang, Layout, Superzoom and Hands-Free. All the features have and will be applied to the account.

Stories are used for mostly current, at the moment -type of announcements and events and collections of those such as sales and 'today at the store' announcements. There are no IGTV videos previously posted on the account, which is why there is no data on how well they would succeed. Therefore, at least one IGTV video should be posted on the account during the marketing plan testing time. For receiving content to the IGTV video, I will be in contact with the marketing team to receive videos which meet with the requirements (longer than one minute and appropriate content). IG live has neither been used previously, so the goal for the marketing plan is to stream one. Before streaming an IG live, as all the posts but especially this one, needs to be planned ahead. The topic of the live needs to be clear, especially when it comes to business accounts and in this case, a business account under a big brand account. Starting a pointless live stream without any reasonable or entertaining content idea can be harmful or controversial for the brand image, which is why there needs to be a clear vision of what kind of content the company wants to live stream.

At Musti & Mirri Kaarina, the new concept puppy dates, held in Kaarina store, is the topic of the IG live stream on the account. It requires that all the participants'/owners' permission for their dogs to be shown in a live stream. That matter is confirmed on the day of the puppy dates, which means that if the permission is denied, there will be no live stream during the testing period. (Chacon, Later Blog, 2017)

There is usually some kind of campaign or event behind every post, or at least something it is related to. They are a relevant part to be thought in the posts, since some of them revolves only around them, which is why campaigns have their own section in the content calendar. The company's common January campaign calendar is combined at this part with the content calendar, filling the dates in which there needs to be a post made on a certain topic concerning things such as a campaign add or sale code included in the post. There are approximately six different campaign related posts which need to be posted as the marketing team has instructed, other posts remaining event, customer or product related. The store's own event calendar has four events planned which need IG marketing, therefore they are also added in the content calendar. The first two events are appearance events from two separate kennels.

The first kennel is **Myrskylahden** chinchillas, that breed chinchillas and exhibit the small animals by making store appearances and letting customer meet and pet the chinchillas as they tell more about them. The second kennel is **Sunny's** Bunnies, a kennel that breeds rabbits and introduces the animals in a similar way as the previous kennel. Such appearance events from different kennels have been popular amongst customers previously, therefore the kennels are welcomed to come and share their activity and why these events are organized. The last two events are for the new concept puppy dates, in which customers could bring puppies less than 5 months old into a socializing event with other puppies. They get to run and play around an enclosed space for about half an hour, with a puppy date instructor slowing down the action when needed. The puppy dates give great and popular content to the account. All together there are six posts planned around the topic puppy dates, in the forms of picture, video, story and an IG live. Store- and Instagram-raffles have also been quite popular and gathered a good number of participants.

The engagement to those type of posts has also been high, receiving more comments and likes compared to other posts, which some of them have not received any comments at all. Below a screenshot from the accounts Instagram insights, to verify the fact that the raffle posts have succeeded well. Since the raffles have been popular amongst the

followers, there are two raffles planned in the content calendar. One of them is a store raffle which takes place in the store and customers can enter it manually by filling their contacts on a piece of paper. This raffle was dedicated to small animal owners of the customer base, as a goal to endorse engagement in that sector. The participants had a chance to win a product package for small animals, worth of about 15 euros. The second raffle is an Instagram raffle, which is a picture post. Followers can enter the raffle by commenting something that is requested in the caption of the post. Since January's theme of the month is a Friends-month, the raffle is related to favorite activities with the best friend, the owners' pet. The prize for the raffle is a tailored product package worth of about 15 euros.

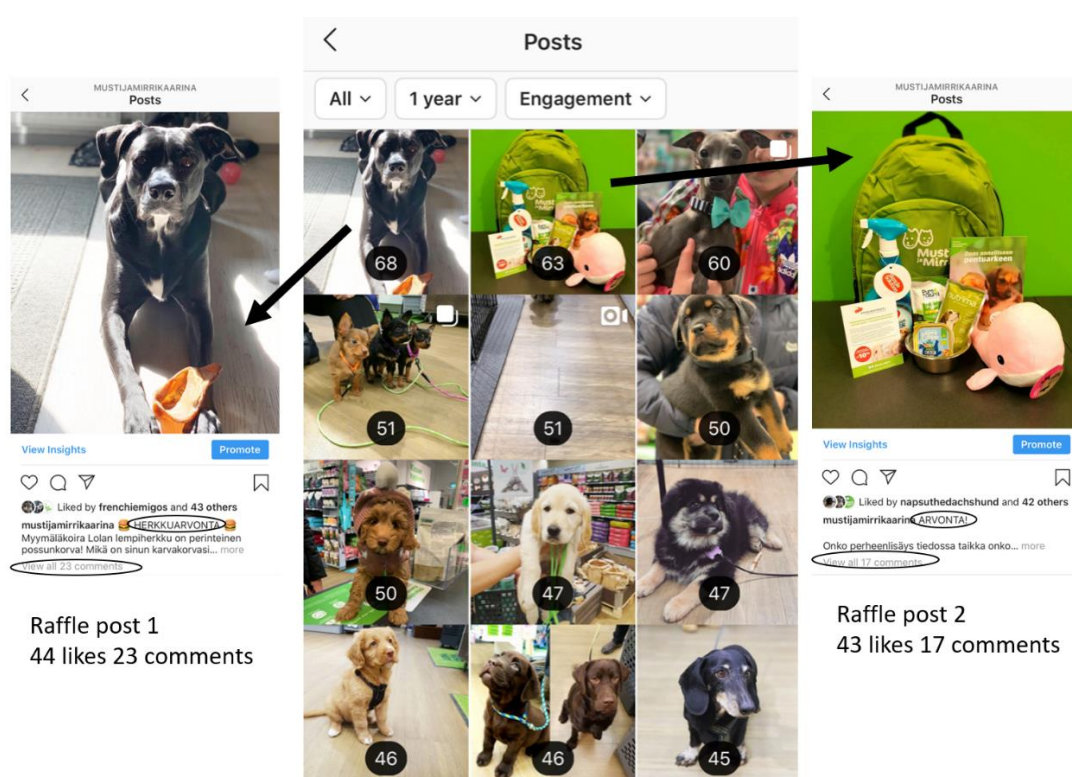


Figure 12, mustijamirrikaarina, Raffle and engagement, 01.01.20

A well thought caption is a big part of the post. Aspects such as finding the right tone for the company and making sure that the audience understands the message are important to decide and keep in mind when writing one. (Aynsley, 2018) For Musti & Mirri Kaarina, captions changed between the content, but the tone remains the same; positive, informational, professional spelling and use of hashtags and emojis are few common features in the captions. In order to keep the content consistent, the captions in the posts

during the marketing plan remain the same tone. The full version of the content calendar will be an appendix at the end of the thesis, and it will show the full captions also.

Hashtags are a part of the caption, which also connects the posts together and makes it easier for followers to search content from one specific hashtag. Adding hashtags to the caption could help get new followers to discover the account and as a result follow the account. For the marketing plan, I created a new hashtag #mustijamirrikaarina, which was used in all the posts made during the testing period. Other common hashtag which is appearing on the content calendar is #pentutreffit (aka #puppydates), since the puppy date as a new beginning concept in Kaarina needs a lot of marketing, Instagram including. Like hashtags, emojis can also be included as a part of the caption. Emojis just like hashtags, can lead to more engagement and make the key points of the caption stand out faster and more clearly. For that matter they are also included as a vital part of the content calendar and the marketing strategy. (Ayres, 2018) These universal signs are also easy to understand without having to deal with any language barriers. (Smarty, 2017) From over 3000 emojis (Emojipedia, 2020), the ones listed below are the most suitable ones for the account to use.



Figure 13, emojis most fit to the mustijamirrikaarina account.

Website link could be added in some of the posts, especially ones that have for example some specific product or a “find out more from the website”- type of caption and this way increase the traffic on the website. (Keefe, 2019) The link is not required in all the posts, only in ones, which would necessarily need the link. After going through all the features in the calendar, it can be filled with the designed content, combined with the company campaign calendar. Below is the filled version of the content calendar with half of the captions showing.

Keeping a consistent theme amongst the shared content is also a vital part when creating and editing pictures and videos. The theme can consist even a few details such as color scheme or a certain editing style (Sausina, 2018). It will help with creating aesthetically pleasing content and keeping it consistent. As analyzed on the previous chapter, the theme of the account is mainly the bright colors and excellent photo quality. Incorporating

the bright green color, which is the company color, to the posts associates the account well with the brand. Besides the bright and vibrant colors, the account does not require any certain color theme, since creating the content cannot be controlled by that. (Co., 2018)

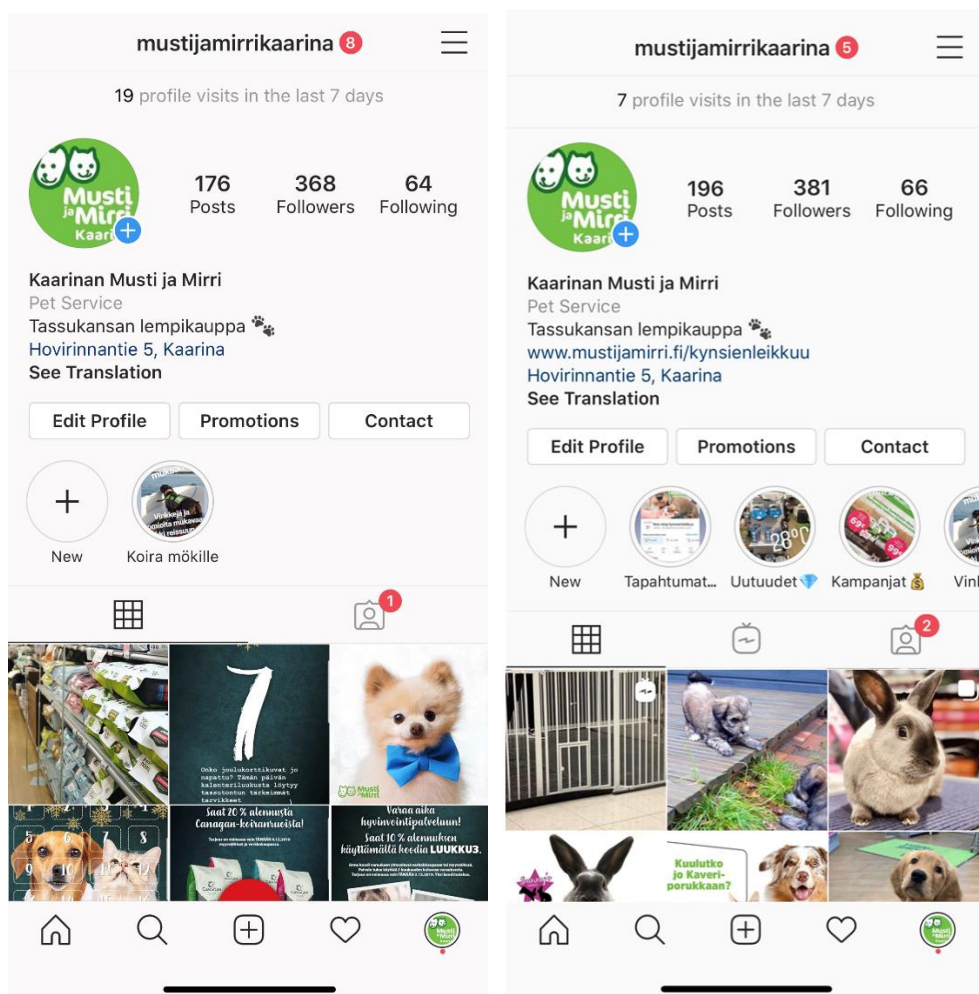
Fun and uplifting content are also listed in the features for the theme. In the Miles marketing plan, the pet content and updates from the store would be also be the chemical X, which makes the followers stay and engage. Seeing content from pets brings emotional connection to those followers who own one, raise endorphins and gives an instant feeling of joy. Pets are also easier to connect with than humans, and they do not usually raise unwanted feelings, which is why the content of them is appealing to followers. Also, by being the safe and reliable channel where followers can share about their pets and gain tips, support and guidance for taking care of them, is considered the chemical X. (Lieber, 2018) (Miles, Instagram Power, 2014)

In order to gain all possible benefits, it was recommended that the marketing strategy becomes a long-term plan rather than just a month-long test run. In order to accomplish that, I was responsible of taking care of the account and following the marketing strategy. That person would require a deeper understanding of Instagram marketing and operating the app, would know the standards of the content posted on the account and should also work in the premises of the Kaarina store in order to be able to provide content to the account.

3.4. Current stage

After implementing the marketing strategy and executing the content calendar it is time to view the results of the current stage aka the ending stage of the account and compare it to the starting stage. The paragraph also introduces the improvements made to the account based on the Miles marketing strategy. The first big part of the marketing strategy was the content calendar. The execution of it will be further analyzed in the analysis chapter.

The Anchor of the Miles plan, the account profile, also got the missing features added and the description improved. One of the suggested features missing from the profile description was the link to the company's website and saved stories as a different collaborations of saved IG stories. Both features were added (see Figure 19 below).



Picture 4 and Picture 5, mustijamirrikaarina,, Main page, 01.01.20, 31.01.20

When comparing the screenshots from the starting- and the finishing stage, the improvements made are easier to detect. Besides the added missing features, changes in follower and post count and in the form of the feed are obvious. The form of the feed's transformation is due to the added IGTV content, which worked well and added another section to the feed, making it look "fuller" with more content and sections to browse. The number of tagged photos (the red number in the screenshots) has also increased by one. What did not work so well were the two white backgrounded pictures next to each other, making them blend to each other a bit. As an appendix, there is a screenshot collaboration from all the posted content which was made during the marketing strategy period to the account. The fully filled content calendar is also an appendix at the end of this thesis.

4 RESEARCH METHODS

In this chapter, the research methods of the study are introduced and how the methods were applied in the study. The research questions are also recapped and implemented into the interviews with two different dog Instagram influencers.

4.1. Mixed Research Methods

The methods used for conducting the marketing strategy and gaining a deeper understanding of Instagram marketing were gathered from suggestions from literature reviews and steps from the Miles Instagram Power 2014 marketing plan were used as the main source for creating the marketing plan and that way applied to the study. The theory exploited in the thesis were mainly articles, but also journals and books. The main data was collected from the Instagram insights feature from the app and from the interviews. The Instagram insights feature was used in many different stages from the creation of the plan, to measuring its' efficiency and the viewing the results of follower growth and account reach.

Instagram insights, a built-in feature in the app displays activities and transactions the account has. By viewing them it is possible to analyze for example:

- Who the target audience is?
- What type of content attracts most?
- How many accounts do the posts (pictures, videos, stories, IGTV, IG live) reach?
- At what times are the account's followers online?
- Follower growth or loss

The feature also displays the overview of the content which is shared weekly and if followers have taken any action from the posts, for example visited the profile or clicked the link in the photo description box. Researching who the target audience is; the company needs to know who they are creating the content for and what type of people are interested in their offering.

4.2. Qualitative method and Interview

As the research questions are implemented into the interviews, I decided to approach them by not including businesses', but Instagram influencers. Instagram influencers are persons or personas who have a great followers base and are popular in the app. Typically, influencers tend to work with some brand or company by promoting it and its' products, and sometimes giving sale codes for the followers. That is called influencer marketing, a form of collaboration between the company and the influencer. (Newberry, Hootsuite Blog, 2019) However, influencers share their opinion, likes and dislikes online, and entertains the followers with daily life updates and posts. The ones selected for the interviews are @milothestaffie and @rambostaffi. The accounts are dog influencers, and both have over 3000 followers.

The research questions are recapped at this point:

- What is/ how to create a successful Instagram marketing plan?
- How to increase number of followers and engagement in case company Instagram page?
- How to improve Instagram presence?

The methods in qualitative research includes for example interviews, observation, immersion and content analysis of text and visual materials. It is a non-numerical research type which focuses on social science. The research type is appealing since it allows the researcher to investigate and make conclusions on peoples' actions, behavior and interactions with others. (Saunders, 2016) The research type is appropriate for the interviews conducted in this thesis. The interviewees were selected based on their content type, since I was looking for dog influencers to correspond with the Musti&Mirri account. The follower amount and style of the account were also one of the factors when choosing the interviewees. @rambostaffi and @milowithmona were obvious choices, since both accounts were followers to company case account, and familiar in that way. Both accounts have over 3000 followers and an interesting and unique theme, which suited well for an interview candidate. Interviewees were first contacted via Instagram direct message and the actual interview conducted via e-mail, the questions sent beforehand and the interviewees had time to think and fill in the responses before e-mailing them back to me. The accounts are currently available in Instagram to view.

5 RESEARCH ANALYSIS

This chapter first analyzes the use of the content calendar and the utility of the marketing plan. Following that it will absorb and analyze the data collected from the Instagram insights and disclose the results on terms of how everything exceeded on the planned marketing period. Lastly, the interview responses are presented and analyzed.

5.1. Evaluation of the marketing strategy and execution

The execution of the content calendar was overall successful, 15 out of the 17 scheduled posts got executed correctly as planned on the account. Although, not all strategies were executed perfectly as planned. On social media, things change rapidly and quickly, and some posts must be added later to the content calendar, as they arise. One post was at the end of the month, an extra-campaign, which the marketing team decided to add later to the campaign calendar. There were difficulties in importing the originally planned IGTV material, a ready-made tutorial about taking care of puppies, created by the marketing team. Three-minute video was unsuccessfully downloaded multiple times on the account, always failed to import. The live also had some complications, since it requires a functional concept and the puppy dates didn't deliver that, it was more beneficial to take IGTV material from the puppy dates, which could be edited and posted later to the account. Therefore, the streaming of an IG live was unsuccessful in this plan. Although there were few unsuccessful deliveries and later adding's on the final execution, the whole concept of the content calendar succeeded. Creating and gathering the content was much easier to manage with the help of the content calendar. Also as expected, there were no stress about when to post or what to post and getting to fully finalize the posts. Overall, I highly think that a content calendar is a great accumulation to businesses' Instagram marketing strategies.

One way to measure the effectiveness and usefulness of the marketing strategy is to view the actual growth data of the account and the success of the posts in terms of reach, likes and comments. During the testing period, the numbers of the account reach and follower growth were surprisingly positive. The account reach numbers had a severe increase in the middle of the month, and even though there were some unfollowing, the overall follower growth increased. The accounts reached data and the follower growth data of the testing period are shown in a Figure 20 and 21 on the following.

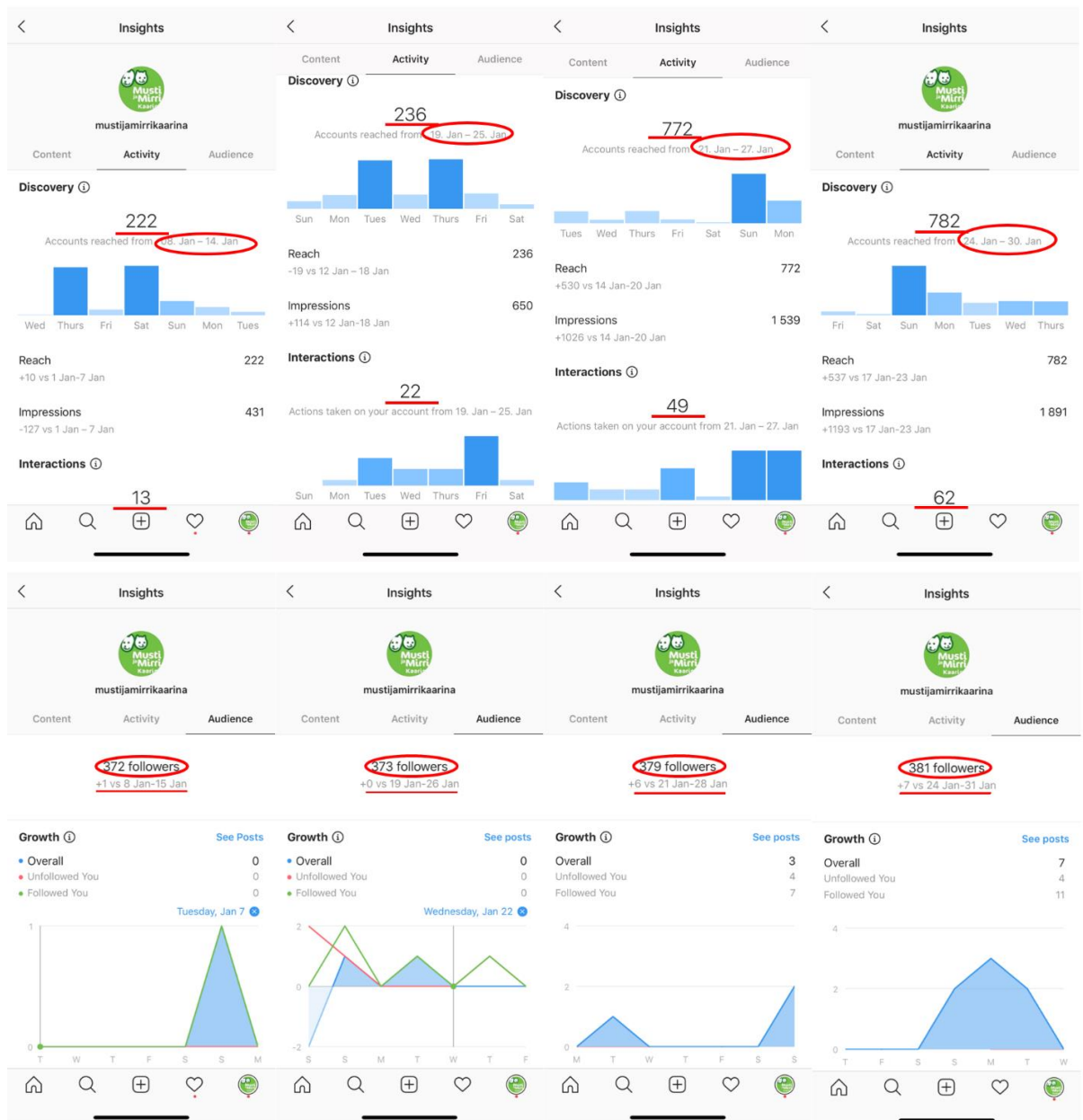


Figure 14 and Figure 15, mustijamirrikaarina, Reach and growth screenshots, 08-31.01.20 (mustijamirrikaarina, Follower's online times, 02.01.2020)

See figure 20, the account reach has grown rapidly, starting from 222 reach, there was a huge peak in the middle of the month, most likely due to the popular raffle post. By the end of the month there were 782 reached accounts, indicating that the total of reached accounts during the marketing strategy period was 560 accounts and the number kept growing gradually. The number of interactions had also increased continually, which indicates that the posts have gained more attention, likes and comments.

Instagram insights indicates that the target audience for Musti & Mirri Kaarina are female users at the age between 25 to 34.

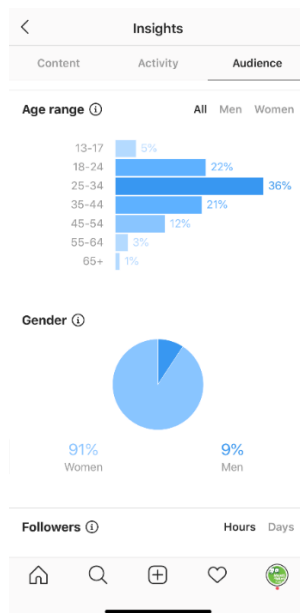


Table 1, Age range of Musti & Mirri Kaarina's IG followers. Chart 1, Gender of followers

The company account's followers' online hours were crucial to discover, in order to identify the top posting times and utilize the data for the marketing strategy. That data was also collected from the Instagram insights feature.

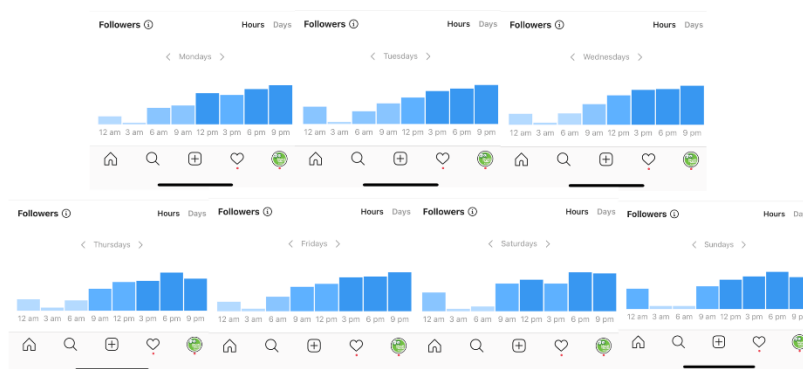


Figure 16, mustijamirrikaarina, Followers' online times, 02.01.20

One of the most engaging post during the testing period was the Instagram-raffle post, which was identified as a well-liked concept based on the previous ones. As the theme of the month January was 'Friends', the raffle was planned around it and the concept of

the raffle kept very simple. The entry rules and the concept are explained in the translated caption below. The post contained a picture of a dog and a cat with a speech bubble asking; 'Do you already belong to our friends-group?'. The picture was created by the Musti & Mirri marketing team. The raffle succeeded well in terms of **account reach and follower engagement**. The post gained the most engagement of all the posts during testing period and even lead to some profile visits, hence it was clearly well received from the audience. Amongst the 20 received comments, on the 30th of January a raffle winner comment was sent a private message to congratulate and ask further questions about the winner's pet and its preferences in terms of food and snack products. After a short conversation, the winner expressed her gratitude, responded to the message, and arrived the following day to collect her prize.

The caption is translated here since it is in Finnish in the actual post: GIVEAWAY – January is the Friends month and in honor of that we decided to treat you with a raffle! The grey and dark weather may bring you down – but the furry friends around us and playful shared activities bring s us joy and energy to everyday routines! To enter the giveaway, comment below what is your favorite activity with your furry friend, and you have a chance to win a WWF organizations fabric bag with its surprise content tailored to your pet's preferences! The prize is worth around 15 euros and it must be reclaimed from the store. Musti & Mirri joint competition rules can be found on our website: link. Good luck with the raffle!

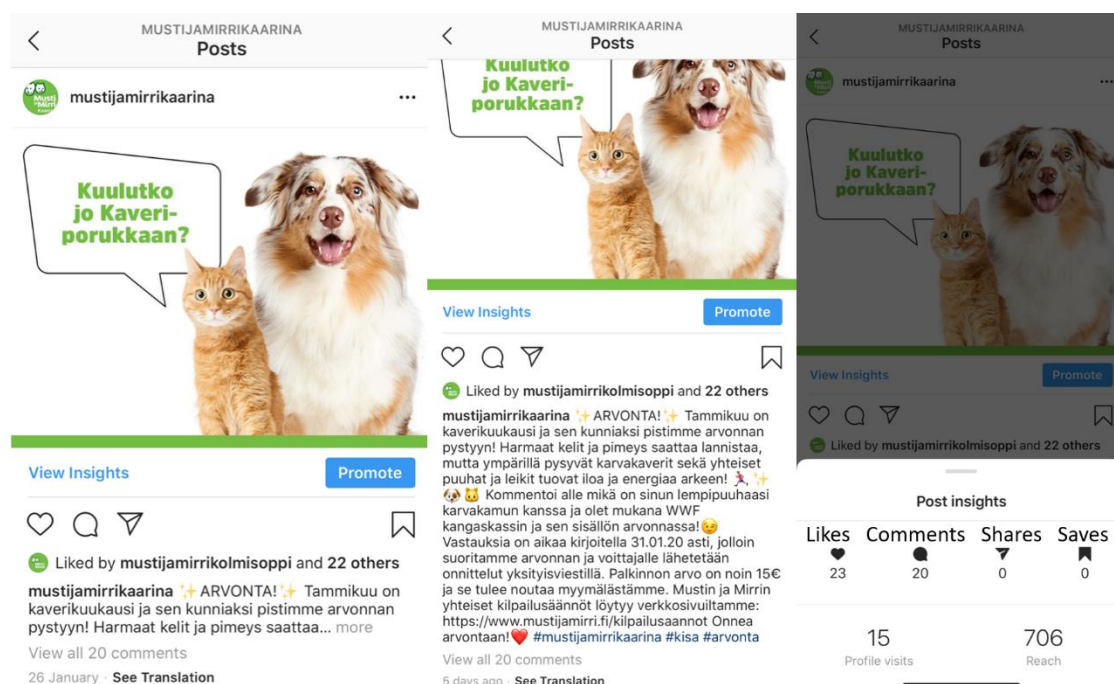


Figure 17, mustijamirrikaarina, Raffle, 31.01.20

One of the important features of the marketing strategy were the posting times and finding out which would be the most beneficial. From Instagram insights analysis, it can be confirmed that Musti & Mirri Kaarina's followers are mostly online during the hours of 12pm to 9pm. Even though Sunday peaks also at 12am, every day of the week looks almost the exact same when it comes to the peaking hours. Based on this analyze, the best posting time for the account is around and after 12pm, no matter what day of the week it is.

5.2. Interviews

The two Finnish dog-influencer accounts @milowithmona and @rambostaffi were interviewed, and their responses are gathered here. First responses are from the account @milowithmona and they are marked as M. The second responses are from the account @rambostaffi and they are marked as R.

The interview questions are divided into three sections based on the research questions of the study. They were created by suggestions from the literature review. The responses are also included in this chapter.

- What is/ how to create a successful Instagram marketing plan?
 1. How long have you had the account? / When have you created the account?
M: *The @milowithmona account was created in March 2017, so it has been up for a bit over 3 years now.*
R: *The account @rambostaffi was created four years ago, in May 2016.*
 2. How did you get started with the account?
M: *Since I have had my dog, I have always been taking a lot of pictures of him and shared them with my friends, so it was only natural to create the account and that is how I got started with it.*
R: *At first, I only had a fan page for my dog in Facebook, but then wanted to reach younger and active audience, so I created the Instagram account. I started with posting content about our exceptional hobby and daily life. I also always write the caption in Finnish and English, so foreign users can also read them and be part of the follower community.*
 3. How did you decide on the username?
M: *The accounts' username consists of the dogs' name and breed, which also felt natural to choose.*
R: *The username has the name of the dog and its' breed. I wanted a simple username without any punctuation marks, so it would be easy to*

pronounce without any explanations. The one I decided to choose was luckily available. It is clear to write, read, pronounce and remember.

4. Did you select any type of theme for the content for example some specific filter or color scheme?

M: *I always try to take versatile pictures of my dog and photograph him in- and outdoors as well as modify them with similarly, which would be classified as the account theme. The lighting and the color scheme effect a lot of my modifying style though.*

R: *The theme of the account is our exceptional hobby, our product. I am a performing artist and perform with my dog. At first, I did not decide on any specific theme, but now I try to invest into good photo quality. Most of the pictures has been photographed with a systems camera and I modify them quickly in photoshop before publishing. I also post pictures of my dog which has been taken by a professional photographer couple of times a week. I have over 70 yet unpublished professional pictures from a photoshoot ready to be posted.*

5. How did you draft your profile description (bio)?

M: *The profile bio I wanted to be clear and short and got my inspiration for my own bio from other dog accounts.*

R: *I do not use any specific color scheme or filter since I cannot modify the pictures from the photoshoot. The profile bio is about our exceptional hobby and it is also a unique identifier to find us on social media. It also has the dogs' breed and age, the city and country we live in and links to our Facebook and YouTube pages.*

6. How did you become an influencer, and would you describe yourself as that?

M: *As far as describing myself as an influencer, I would not. But it is nice to see that my dog content interests other people too.*

R: *I always try to keep my feed versatile and plan my posts ahead. I also try to be real, something viewers can relate to and find joy out of. My posts are good quality and my captions written with humor, so I guess that has leaded me into being an influencer. My stories are more relaxed, in a way that I do not have to modify them or invest into perfect photo quality.*

7. How would you describe managing the account?

M: *The account managing feels comfortable, and not at all stressful.*

R: *The account managing sometimes feel like a lot of work, planning and being consistent.*

8. Do you currently have some type of marketing plan for the account?

M: *I do not have any marketing plan for the account.*

R: *My current "marketing plan" is posting once per day and our hobby needs to be in the feed at least 4-5 times per week, but also daily life pictures keep the feed interesting and versatile. My followers enjoy that kind of content also, which is why it is important to post about it.*

9. Have you ever used any type of marketing strategy? If yes, what?

M: *I have never used one.*

R: *I have never had an actual marketing plan for the account.*

10. Did you find it useful?

M: -

R: -

11. Do you feel like a marketing strategy could benefit managing the account?

M: *I have not had one, but I do think that a marketing plan would be beneficial for the account.*

R: *I think that it could be beneficial for the account and maintaining it.*

12. How often do you post?

M: *I try to post one to two times per week plus a story every day.*

R: *I try to follow my post once a day- plan, since being consistent is important.*

13. Is there a schedule or a content calendar that you utilize?

M: *I do not have any schedule, nor do I use content calendar for planning my content, except the posting time which I keep consistent.*

R: *I do not have any other schedule or content calendar in use for the post planning. Sometimes I used to keep some type of calendar, which would help especially in event marketing.*

14. At what times do you post?

M: *The posts are usually published after 7 in the evening.*

R: *The posting time is usually in the afternoon or in the evening hours from 4pm to 8pm.*

15. How would you spend your time on the app?

M: *I like to spend my time in the app liking pictures from the accounts I follow and discover new and interesting accounts to follow.*

R: *I like to spend my time in the app mainly posting my own content and interacting with my followers. I also like to view others posts and liking them but commenting takes too much time for me. I irregularly search new accounts to follow, but when I do, I like to pick out more than one at once.*

- How to increase number of followers and engagement in Instagram?

1. How would you describe your follower base/target audience?

M: *My followers/ target audience consist of followers from all age groups and from different countries.*

R: *There are a lot of Finnish and foreign users in Instagram who does not know who I am or what I do. Most of my active followers are*

dedicated Finnish dog owners and I would classify them as my most beneficial target group.

2. How have you managed to gain your followers?
M: *The way I gained my followers has been natural: I have not deliberately tried to grow my follower base.*
R: *My follower gain increases daily, but it increases the fastest by "follow for follow" method. I also try to use common hashtags such as #Instagram, #Insta, #PhotoOfTheDay, #Dogs, #Koira, #Koirat etc.*
3. Have you promoted yourself in some way to gain more followers?
M: *I have not promoted my account in any ways to gain publicity.*
R: *I promote my account few times per year, in the same advertisement as my upcoming events.*
4. When your follower base increased, did it make you more motivated with the account or more interested to track data?
M: *When I learned that my follower count kept growing, it did not really change my view on the account, in terms of enhance motivation or made me more interested to track data.*
R: *When I noticed my follower gain increasing, it enhanced my motivation towards the account and tracking data.*
5. Do you track your follower gain or loss from Instagram Insights?
M: *I do check my follower gain or loss weekly.*
R: *I track the follower gain and loss every day. Obviously, the more followers you have, the better it looks.*
6. Do you use any other apps to track follower gain or loss?
M: *I do not use any other apps to track my follower count.*
R: *For tracking my follower gain or loss, any other apps are not in use.*
7. Are you into continually growing your follower base?
M: *I would be interested in still growing the follower base.*
R: *I am interested in still growing my follower count.*
8. Do you engage with your followers?
M: *I do.*
R: *I like to engage with my followers. Still only those, who are first in contact with me.*
9. In which ways?
M: *I like to interact with my followers by answering their direct messages and comments.*
R: *By answering to a comment or a reaction.*
10. Would you say that you have established "follower-relationships", as in devoted followers who you regularly engage with?

M: *I have gained so called “follower-relationships” and a lot of actual friends!*

R: *I have managed to establish few follower-relationships, but I feel like they seem to change and disappear over the years. For example, when I scrolled through my old posts in the means of finding some account, I stumbled on a user who used to follow my account actively couple of years ago, but now their pictures are not appearing in my feed anymore.*

11. Do you promote any brands/products?

M: *I do not do that currently.*

R: *I sometimes do that. As a performing artist, we have a sponsor and occurring to our contract I promote their products in a way we have agreed on once a month, and I tag them in my pictures 3 to 4 times per week. I also do occasional co-operations with some dog brands, for example a raffle on their account. With these raffles we are trying to grow our follower base.*

12. How do you choose which brands you work with?

M: *When I do work with brands, I choose them if they sound interesting or if it is a brand which I would support anyway.*

R: *I choose the dog brands I work with very carefully. Domestic products and brands and natural raw materials are always at the top of my list. I only promote products which I find to be good for my dog and aim to test every product before the co-operation is permanent, because I want a guarantee on the quality of the products. I want to truly stand behind the products I promote and in Instagram you have to be careful, because there is a lot contact requests from both Finland and foreign countries, concerning about a short term co-operation, and most of these requests are automatic messages which the companies send. Most of the times the companies send the same message out to multiple users, without even knowing who you are.*

13. Have you arranged giveaways/raffles for your followers?

M: *I have not organized any giveaways or raffles for my followers.*

R: *Yes, we organize them 2 to 4 times per year and they are always domestic only.*

14. If yes, how have they succeeded?

M: -

R: *They always gather a large group of participants, but they seem to be more successful in Facebook than Instagram. Still, I feel like they increase engagement and I always promote my own products at the same time, since during the raffle there are more viewers and followers to reach. But the best Instagram co-operations I have agreed on outside Instagram, by already being familiar with the product or visiting the manufacturer multiple times. I appreciate the realness in this aspect too.*

15. Have they increased engagement?

M: -

R: Yes they have.

- How to improve Instagram presence?

1. What do you think about your Instagram presence?

M: I would describe my Instagram presence as rather good. There is always room for improvement, but I am satisfied with it.

R: My presence in Instagram is certainly weaker than in Facebook, though not bad at all.

2. What means have you taken in order to improve your Instagram presence?

M: For improving it, I like to use hashtags and photo tags and captions in my posts.

R: I have invested into the quality of my content and used different hashtags in order to improve my presence there.

3. Do you use captions and hashtags in your posts?

M: Yes, in every post.

R: Captions are always a part of my posts.

4. Do you have your own hashtag?

M: I have my own hashtag which I add in my posts always.

R: I have my own hashtag #skeittaavakoiri (#skateboardingdog).

5. Do you use Instagram Insights to gain data of your account transactions?

M: Instagram Insights is familiar to me and I use it to track data on the account transactions.

R: I do not use Instagram Insight to view data of my account transactions.

6. Do you analyze the data and create content based on what attracts the most or do you just post what you want?

M: I do not analyze them further, such as create content based on what has attracted my followers previously. I like to create content which I am personally happy with.

R: I do not analyze the data. I usually post whatever I want, so this is something to improve!

7. Do you use any other apps to gain data of your account transactions?

M: Instagram Insights is the only data service I use to gain data from the account transactions, so no.

R: Other apps for tracing the account transactions are not in use.

8. Have you utilized all forms of content (pictures, videos, IGTV and live) on your account?

M: The content I have posted has only been pictures and videos and I have not used IGTV or IG live on my account.

R: I have only published pictures and videos, so no IGTV or live material on this account, at least yet.

9. Which one of the content-forms does your followers prefer?
M: *My followers are clearly into cute content and Milo's cutest pictures are most liked ones.*
R: *My followers seem to enjoy my video content the most.*
10. Do you post stories?
M: *I like to post stories daily.*
R: *Yes, I do.*
11. Do you use special features (such as polls) in them to enhance engagement?
M: *I sometimes add special features into them such as polls to enhance engagement.*
R: *Sometimes I have added special features such as polls into them and they have succeeded well!*
12. Have you done any collaborations with other influencers?
M: *I am currently co-operating with other influencers.*
R: *I have not worked with other Instagram influencers.*
13. If yes, what kind of?
M: *We are making an informative picture about the current Covid-19 threats.*
R: -
14. Do you follow any trends/photo challenges to keep up?
M: *I do follow picture trends to keep and to create fun content.*
R: *I aim to follow photo trends that I could execute with my dog.*
15. Have you used other social media channels to promote your Instagram account?
M: *For promoting my Instagram account, I do not use any other social media sites.*
R: *For promoting my Instagram account, I have used YouTube and Facebook.*

The responses of the interviews were quite different, showing that the first interviewee, @milowithmona had more relaxed approach to the account and its' managing, even though viewing the data feature Instagram Insights was more familiar to her. The second, @rambostaffi interviewee had more experience with promoting products and as a performing artist with her dog, even had her own sponsor deal. Despite the differences, there were a lot of similarities when discussed about follower base and engagement and interest into growing it. Both interviewees agreed on finding that a marketing plan could be beneficial for the account but have not had one previously. They also shared similar values when choosing brands to work with and it was important for both to honestly support the brand and not just advertise for paycheck. The matter is also important since influencers value trustful relationships with followers and being loyal to their followers. The interviews gave a real grasp into an Instagram-influencers benefits and challenges on the app and was interesting to collect. The interview was collected via Instagram direct message and e-mail.

6 CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the study the research questions were presented and the aim of the study was to discover answers to those questions. The questions and answers are presented in the following:

- **What is/ how to create a successful Instagram marketing plan?**

A successful Instagram marketing plan includes a professional business account, which has all the needed elements such as company name as the account name, company name in the bio description, a clear, simple and recognizable logo, some type of fun, exciting and inspiring bio description of the company, link to the website, field of business, excellent quality in the posts, a common theme and overall understanding of the profile, content and followers. Content calendar is also a vital part of the marketing strategy since it assists with managing the posting schedule and creating the posts. The calendar template created for the study obtains information such as posting time, date, content type (picture, video, IGTV, IG live or a story), what campaign or event is attached to the post, caption, hashtags, emojis and a website link. The calendar is designed to be filled one month prior to posting, but the posts can also be added as they arise. The AIDA model can be implemented into the Instagram marketing strategy as well as the four steps of Miles Basic marketing plan, to discover the right approach to the account atmosphere and marketing plan. The steps were the Anchor, a professional business profile, the Offer, a recognizable account, the Visual curator, an image sharing strategy and the Chemical X, a unique matter which attracts followers. (Miles, Instagram Power, 2014) Amongst those things, a successful marketing plan originates after first testing different things for the account. Also, tracking the account transactions data helps with discovering what the audience is into and what kind of content should be produced. A successful and personal Instagram marketing plan can be created based on those pieces of information.

- **How to increase number of followers and engagement in case company Instagram page?**

There are multiple factors which effects on follower and engagement increase. Firstly, exploiting a successful and personalized Instagram marketing plan for the account and tracking data helps to discover the preferences of the followers and

maintaining the chosen theme. By also being active and consistent, creating content which has incentives to engage for example a raffle, a giveaway or a question in the caption increases engagement. Commenting and liking other accounts' posts is important for increasing engagement and vice versa, replying to comments and direct messages not only supports engagement, but it also enhances customer relationships. Collaborating with Instagram influencers can gain more visibility to the account, leading possibly to new followers. Promoting the account also has an effect on the matter, since visibility often leads to new audience. By also following other accounts, the company case account received many follow backs.

- **How to improve Instagram presence?**

Instagram presence can be improved by being active on the app, posting, commenting and liking other posts. Also, by using hashtags and captions in the posts makes them available for other users to discover through different paths on the app, which effects positively on the presence. Utilizing all content forms (picture, video, story, IGTV and live) can help with improving presence in Instagram, since the content then appears in different sections of the application and is more visible to other users to view. Collaborations with Instagram influencers who have thousands of followers benefits the presence, since the account can be tagged to the post and reach more audience. Promoting the account on other social media channels can also has a positive effect on improving presence, since other social media channels might have a different follower base than in Instagram or some of the users might have not discovered the account before.

As stated, social media and the applications such as Instagram, are a continually developing platforms for marketing and the discussion on how to execute a successful marketing plan for those, are endless. However, the sources and methods used in conducting of the research are a collection of basic and advanced, up-to-date marketing methods, which will most likely apply for years. The subject of the study is relevant since Instagram account is fairly common for companies to have and know how to operate. The study is also meaningful because it gave results on how marketing strategy can be beneficial in Instagram, and combined with Musti & Mirri Kaarina's Instagram account, it gave the business real results on gaining more visibility and transactions in Instagram. As stated, the account had not had any previous marketing strategy, therefore the study also provided new findings and information. The study was expected to discover a

successful Instagram marketing plan and execute it efficiently. The purpose of the thesis was to gain a deeper understanding of Instagram marketing and how it works. Based on the results of the created Instagram marketing plan, the research has been significant and proven to be beneficial for the case company.

The study began with familiarizing and learning about different channels on social media, proceeding to the focus Instagram. Its' features were carefully presented since comprehending how to operate the application is crucial in order to manage it. For creating the marketing plan for the company account, more information about Instagram marketing needed to be searched and collected and narrowed to the ones from academic and reliable sources. The AIDA model and the four steps of Miles marketing plan were operating as the base for the marketing plan and Instagram insights as the main data resource. The feature provided information such as followers' online times and what kind of content attracts the followers, which was valuable information when conducting the marketing plan. It helped to discover for example which are the appropriate posting times for gaining better visibility and more likes and transactions and utilize that information in the marketing plan. Based on those data collections, the content calendar was created and combined with the Kaarina stores' event calendar, which also needed marketing in Instagram. The testing period of the marketing plan was the month of January 2020, and during that testing period the completed content calendar was executed into the company account and the transaction data collected from Instagram insights. The aim was to discover whether the suggestions the marketing plan was created based on had been valid or not. The final results were presented after the marketing testing period and the initial and current stage of the accounts' main pages were compared and the improvements displayed. Two Instagram influencers were also interviewed to contribute to the study and the interview questions were created based on the research questions, to cover all the key points of the study.

The results of the marketing plan and the interview responses were analyzed and compared, and a lot of similarities were found from them. The aspects of a professional business profile were familiar to the respondents, and both had adapted the needed elements. The respondents posting times were also similar with the suggestions from the literature sources, which recommended posting in the evening hours, but still memorizing the accounts' followers' online times. The use of hashtags and captions also coordinated with the suggestions from the literature sources as well as working with brands. Data tracking from Instagram insights was partly familiar with the respondents,

but neither of them analyzed the data any further. Creating raffles and giveaways were also a part of normal posting schedule for one of the respondents, which was one of the methods of enhancing engagement based on the suggestions from literature sources.

6.1. Validity, reliability and recommendations

The main challenges in the validity and reliability of the study was finding proper sources from amongst all the available information. The references used in the study were mainly articles and books, which have been published in academic sources and the ones used on creating the marketing plan, contains validated methods on how to conduct social media marketing and more specifically, Instagram marketing. The results of the marketing plan have also shown that the literature materials and the methods found from those has proven to be functional, beneficial and efficient. The validity and reliability of the study can be ruled as accurate at least currently since there is continual development in the social media field and new features could arise. The interviews gave a realistic image of an Instagram Influencer, but with a bigger follower amount the responses concerning about the marketing plan for example, could have been quite different. Despite that, the responses seemed genuine and adds to the validity and reliability.

Recommendations for future research are suggested since Instagram is a continually evolving social media channel. As the marketing strategy performed successfully on the Kaarina stores' account, it could benefit other Turku region Musti & Mirri stores' accounts as well and would be recommended for them to adapt to their Instagram accounts. The region stores all work together for a common goal, therefore maintaining everyone active and visible on Instagram benefits the whole region.

6.2. Own learning

The road has been long, from choosing the topic, to writing the proposal to conducting the actual study and thesis as well as designing questions and choosing interview candidates, but in the end, very rewarding. The main learnings I have gained during the process of making this thesis has been working and planning on my own and the methods on creating a successful marketing plan and presence in Instagram. Even though the process had some challenges along the way, it was very exciting.

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Content calendar January 2020, @mustijamirrikaarina

Excel file.

| Date | Time | Picture | Video | Story/TV/live | Campaign/Event | Caption | Hashtag | Emoji | Website link |
|------------|-----------|--|--|--|---|--|--|-------|---|
| January 1 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 2 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 3 | 12:00 ip. | Picture of christmastree fundrasing donations for Remy cat | | | Christmas tree fundraising | Thank you to everyone who participated in the christmastree fundraising. In the picture | #joulupuukeräys #mustijamirrikaarina | 🐾🐾🐾 | |
| January 4 | 12:00 ip. | Picture of storedog Kalle from @elaintenkoulukuvau | | | Store exeptional open hours | On epiphany, Monday, we have exeptional open hours from 12am to 4pm. | #mustijamirrikaarina | 🐶❤ | |
| January 5 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 6 | 12:00 ip. | | | Story: Store contest remider for small animal | Store raffle | | | | |
| January 7 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 8 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 9 | 1:00 ip. | | | Story: Screenshot of event created in Facebook | Appereance from Myrskylahden Chinchillat | | | | |
| January 10 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 11 | 12:00 ip. | Picture of Myrskylahden Chinchilla from their visit day | | | Appereance appreciation picture, Reminder to participate on store raffle | The lovely chinchillas of Myrskylähti made an appereance in our store yesterday, thanks again | #chinchilla #smallanimals #myymäläkisa #mustijamirrikaarina | 🐭🐭🐭 | |
| January 12 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 13 | 12:00 ip. | | | Story: Bonus from purchases! | Friends campaign: bonus from purchases | | | | |
| January 14 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 15 | 12:00 ip. | Picture of friends campaign, created by company marketing team | | | January Friends-campaign, sales and offers for regular customers | | #mustijamirrikaarina #kaveri | 🐾🐾 | https://www.mustijamirrikaarina.fi/kaveri |
| January 16 | 1:00 ip. | | Video of puppies playing from a puppy date in Kupittaa M&M | | Announcement: Puppy dates in Kaarina | beginning to host the Puppydates from 23.01.20 also here in | #mustijamirrikaarina #pentutreffit | 🐶🐶🐶 | |
| January 17 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 18 | 1:00 ip. | | | Story: Extra weekend campaign -20% off from one normal prized item - poster | Extra weekend campaign -20% off from one normal prized item | | | | |
| January 19 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 20 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 21 | 1:00 ip. | Picture of campaign display from the store | | | Month's campaign | the campaign offers in our store! All furry-friends, come to shop! | #mustijamirrikaarina #kampanja #kaverikampanja | 🐾🐾🐾 | |
| January 22 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 23 | 12:00 ip. | Picture of a puppy visitor | | Story: First puppy dates in Kaarina! | First puppy date in Kaarina! Come join! | Wuf! Today we introduce puppy dates in Kaarina | #pentutreffit #mustijamirrikaarina | 🐶🐶🐶 | |
| January 24 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 25 | | | | | | | | | |
| January 26 | 12:00 ip. | Picture of dog&cat created by marketing team | | | Instagram raffle | kaverikuukausi ja sen kunniaksi pistimme arvonnast pystyyn! | #mustijamirrikaarina #kisa #arvonta | 🐶🐶🐶 | w.mustijamirrikaarina.fi/kilpailusaannot |
| January 27 | 1:00 ip. | Studio picture of Sunny's Bunnies rabbit | | | Appereance tomorrow from Sunny's Bunnies rabbits | Lovely Sunny's Bunnies rabbits makes an appereance in our store tomorrow, Tuesday 28.01 | #sunnysbunnies #kanila #myymälävierailu #tapahtuma | 🐰🐰🐰 | |
| January 28 | 12:00 ip. | | | Story: Appereance today at the store from Sunny's Bunnies | Appereance from Sunny's Bunnies rabbits in the store | | | | |
| January 29 | 12:00 ip. | Picture of Sunny's Bunnies rabbits | | | Appereance appreciation picture of the Sunny's Bunnies rabbits | Thank you for the visit yesterday, Sunny's Bunnies! In the pictures | #sunnysbunnies #myymälävierailu #mustijamirrikaarina | 🐰🐰🐰 | |
| January 30 | 12:00 ip. | Picture of puppies playing | | IG live from the puppy date, 1. Story: Puppy dates again today 2. Story: Extra end of the month campaign, -20€ from over 100€ purchase | Puppy dates in the store, Extra end of the month campaign, -20€ from over 100€ purchase | Small puppies at 16:30-17:00 and medium size puppies at 17:10-17:40. All under 5months old and at least 1 week before vaccinated puppies are | #mustijamirrikaarina #pentutreffit | 🐶🐶🐶 | |
| January 31 | 1:30 ip. | | Video preview of IGTV video of puppy dates 30.1. | Story: Extra end of the month campaign, -20€ from over 100€ purchase, IGTV video of puppy dates 30.1. | Extra end of the month campaign, -20€ from over 100€ purchase, Puppy dates in the store | Kaarina's Puppy dates. Small puppies at 16:30-17:00 and medium size puppies at 17:10-17:40. All under 5months old and | #mustijamirrikaarina #pentutreffit | 🐶🐶🐶 | |

All posted content during January 2020

